

# Work Readiness Academy

## December 2024 Monthly Report

### Message from the Administration



*"Courage, kindness, friendship, character. These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness."* - RJ Polacio

To our WRA & Project SEARCH Community,

As 2024 comes to a close we want to take this opportunity to reflect on the tremendous effort that our students make each and every day to not only improve themselves, but also to encourage, motivate and inspire those around them to do the same. Students have explored ways to understand kindness from a variety of perspectives this month. Lessons have focused on the "five senses" of kindness to give students an opportunity to express what and how kindness can look, feel, and sound. Students also participated in a month-long kindness challenge in which they learned to make a conscious effort to keep small acts of kindness in the forefront of their thoughts and ideas. Students have been supported in finding ways while at school, home and out in the community to "pay it forward" in an effort to spread positivity and joy to those around them. We recognize that during the holiday season opportunities to spread kindness are more easily accessible. With that in mind, our students continue to volunteer weekly at a local food pantry to remind ourselves that we should always "do things for others, not because of who they are, or what they do in return, but because of who we are," Harold S. Kushner.

Other highlights in the month of December included:

- The development of our two new WRA School-Based Enterprises - **Soul Energy** Vegan Granola and **Furlicious** pet treats. We are thrilled to have partnered with two local businesses - **Soul Bowls** in Scotch Plains and **The Morning Roast** in Cranford - who have both offered to showcase our products in their establishments.

- The students at Project SEARCH participated in a first ever modified **Patient Care Technician/Nursing Assistant skills training** where they learned how to take vital signs including temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and oxygen saturation! The training was part of our ongoing participating in Atlantic Health System's Federal Grant to promote the training and hiring of more nurses and patient-facing staff across all hospitals including Overlook Medical Center in Summit.
- Our annual **Student Holiday Party** that brought together students from both of our programs for food, games (including Tracie's annual holiday Kahoot), and socialization!

Finally, please mark your calendars for Wednesday, January 15th. We will be hosting an "In Person" **Provider Fair** at the WRA. This is a great opportunity to come meet and speak with agencies who provide services to students and young adults with disabilities after they graduate from high school and leave our program. See the graphic below for more details and the QR Code/link to register.

Wishing all of our students and families - and our community partners and supporters - a joyful holiday season. Enjoy some time off, engage in self-care, and have a happy and healthy New Year!

**Josh Bornstein, Director**

**Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Instruction**

**UCESC Work Readiness Academy**



**PROVIDER FAIR**  
*Life After 21*

Please join us for an in person provider fair. Connect with different agencies offering supports and services to our students as they transition to adulthood. All UCESC families are welcome to attend!

**When** January 15, 2025  
7:00 pm

**Where** Work Readiness Academy  
Holy Spirit Church  
970 Suburban Rd, Union

**Register Here**





**Contact Us**  
908-838-0613

**Email**  
[ndellavecchia@ucesc.org](mailto:ndellavecchia@ucesc.org)

**Our Location**  
970 Suburban Rd. Union



## December 2024 Data



### Enrollment as of December 20, 2024

Actual: **26**

Changes: Entered: **0** Exited: **0**

Referrals: **1** (SY 2024-25)

Intakes Scheduled: **1**

Accepted: **TBD**

12/12/24 - **Lockdown Drill**

12/20/24 - **Fire Drill**



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**December 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025 - School Closed - Winter Recess**

**January 2, 2025 - School Reopens**

**January 13, 2025 - 1 PM Dismissal - Staff Development Day**

**January 20, 2025 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**



### New Attendance Reporting Email!

In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, **please send us an email at [AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org](mailto:AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org).**

You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is

before 8am, please leave a message.

## December Student of the Month

**Matt C.**

**Matt's** vibrant and enthusiastic personality has enhanced our program and brightened our days here at the WRA! His willingness to learn and persevere through challenges has been remarkable. Not only does **Matt** work hard to accomplish his goals, learn new tasks, and communicate his needs, he also goes above and beyond to fill our hallways with his beautiful and creative artwork. **Matt's** smile can light up any room and his positive energy is infectious. Congratulations **Matt!** We are so proud of you!







## *December Classroom Spotlight with Sharlene McQuade*

It's been a busy and fun December for my homeroom students! We have been working hard to identify our post secondary goals. With the use of technology, we have created Google slideshows to visually represent our ideas and opinions. By creating and presenting our Google slides for our peers, we are learning to self-advocate during future IEP and/or transition planning meetings, by practicing to have clear and effective communication and confidence while discussing our futures. We have also been learning how to accept feedback, focusing on listening and thanking the person for the helpful information; how to be adaptable/flexible in the workplace; and, the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. During our financial literacy class, our focus has been on comparison shopping and staying within a budget for the Holiday Season.



Let's not forget about our class business. **"Furlicious Treats...they are Pawsitively Delicious!"** Our graphic design and marketing team has been putting their creativity and artistic abilities into action to create a business logo. Additionally, the entire class has baked various flavored treats that were tested by our family dogs. We are excited to present our final product and begin displaying in local businesses!

**Sharene McQuade**  
Work Readiness Academy Teacher  
SLE Instructor



*Kiya identifying her post secondary goals*





*Alfi and Hernan doing some comparison shopping for holiday food*

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***Anthony** rolling dough for the dog bones*

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*Erin kneading the dough for the dog treats*

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*Our **Furlicious** Sales Team*

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*The **Furlicious** Logo and Marketing Team*

## *Behind the Success...A Look at Our Exceptional Staff*



### **Staff Member of the Month: Deb Italiano**

#### **How long have you worked for UCESC?**

This is my 2nd year as a Teaching Assistant.

#### **What do you love best about your job?**

Working out in the community with the students, and building new relationships.

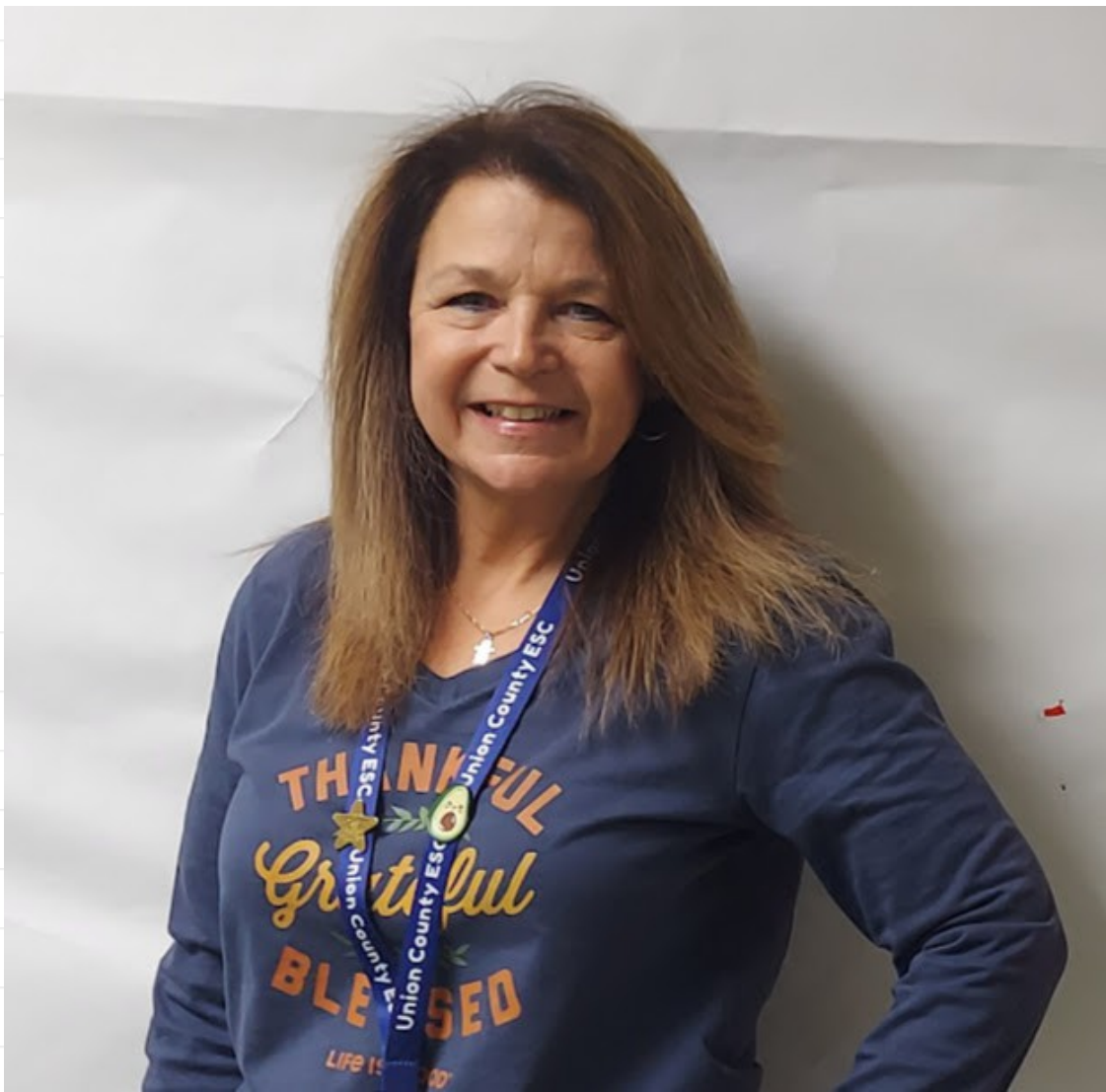
#### **What do you like to do in your free time?**

Bingo, bingo, and more bingo!

#### **What is one thing that people would be surprised to know about you?**

I took graphic design at UCVTS during high school, and have been a graphic designer for 44 years!





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## *Work-Based Learning Snapshots*



***Charlie** at Children's Specialized Hospital*



***Ben** at Summit Health Mailroom*





*Kevin at Barnes & Noble*



***Matt** at ShopRite*





*Alejandro at Classic Cafe*



*Nick at Sweet & Fancy*

## *Project SEARCH*



The Project SEARCH Program at Overlook Medical Center is now in its 9th year. Applications for the Class of 2026 (cohort begins in the Fall of 2025) are now open. Applications for the Project SEARCH program are accepted on a rolling basis between November 1st and May 1st.

We are offering virtual information sessions prospective students, families, or referring school district staff on the following dates:

Tuesday, January 28th from 7-8pm

Tuesday, February 25th from 7-8pm

Please email us at [projectsearch@ucesc.org](mailto:projectsearch@ucesc.org) to register and we will send you a Google Meet link.



For more information about Project SEARCH, or to access the application for the Class of 2026, please visit:

<https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the-work-readiness-academy/project-search>

*The students completed their first internship rotation this month!*



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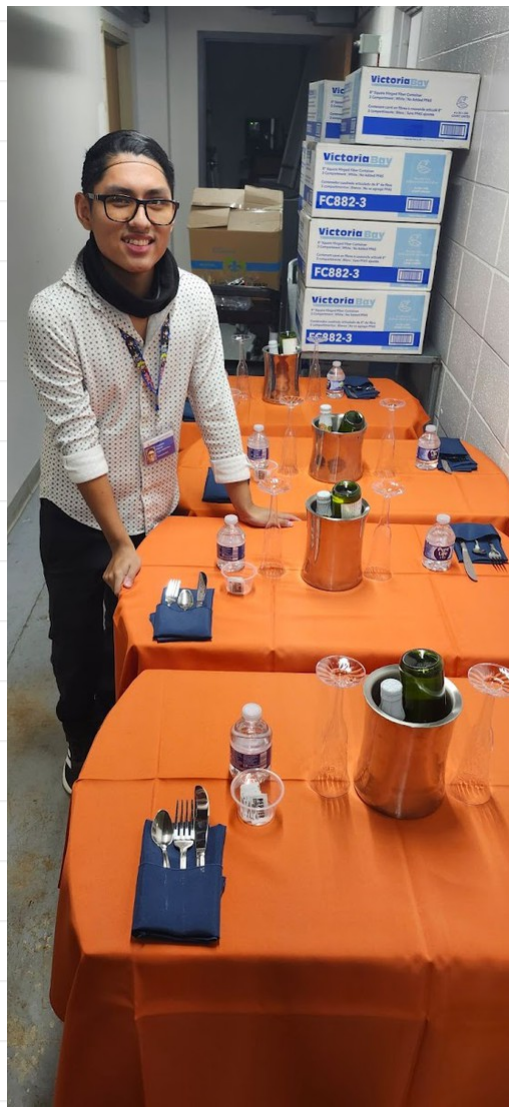






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## *Students Unleash Inner Peace During Yoga Elective*



### **Yoga Elective**

The students at WRA have the opportunity to take yoga each Friday in an elective period. Homeroom teacher, Jodi Klimko, is also a certified yoga instructor and leads the group. Each 45 minute practice allows the students to set an intention for their practice and are then led through a guided awareness, breathing practice and poses in one of three different styles of yoga. It allows for a quieting of the mind and body after our busy week at work. So far, they have practiced a slow flow in the Baptiste style of yoga, as well as Yin Yoga and a restorative practice. So far the restorative style of yoga featuring slow movements and lots of relaxation is the group favorite.



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## *WRA Bulletin Board Showcase!*







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## *Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!*

It was great to run into former WRA student **Ryan** who is now in his 5th year working in the bakery department at the ShopRite in Clark, New Jersey!



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## *Picture(s) of the Month*

**Christian** on the helipad at Overlook...catching the guiding light!





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**Izzy** and **Alejandro** collaborating on a Jenga creation!



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*WRA Feasting and Giving Thanks Together!*



*Nicky L. whipping up the mashed potatoes!*

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*Penelope prepping the Mac 'n Cheese!*

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***Marguerite** having fun playing "Pin the Feather on the Turkey"!*

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## *Community Resources/Events*

Please save the date! UCESC and the Work Readiness Academy will be hosting a Service Provider Fair on January 15th. Details below!

# PROVIDER FAIR

## *Life After 21*

Please join us for an in person provider fair. Connect with different agencies offering supports and services to our students as they transition to adulthood. All UCESC families are welcome to attend!

**When**

**January 15, 2025**  
**7:00 pm**

**Where**

**Work Readiness Academy**  
Holy Spirit Church  
970 Suburban Rd, Union

**Register Here**



Contact Us  
908-838-0613

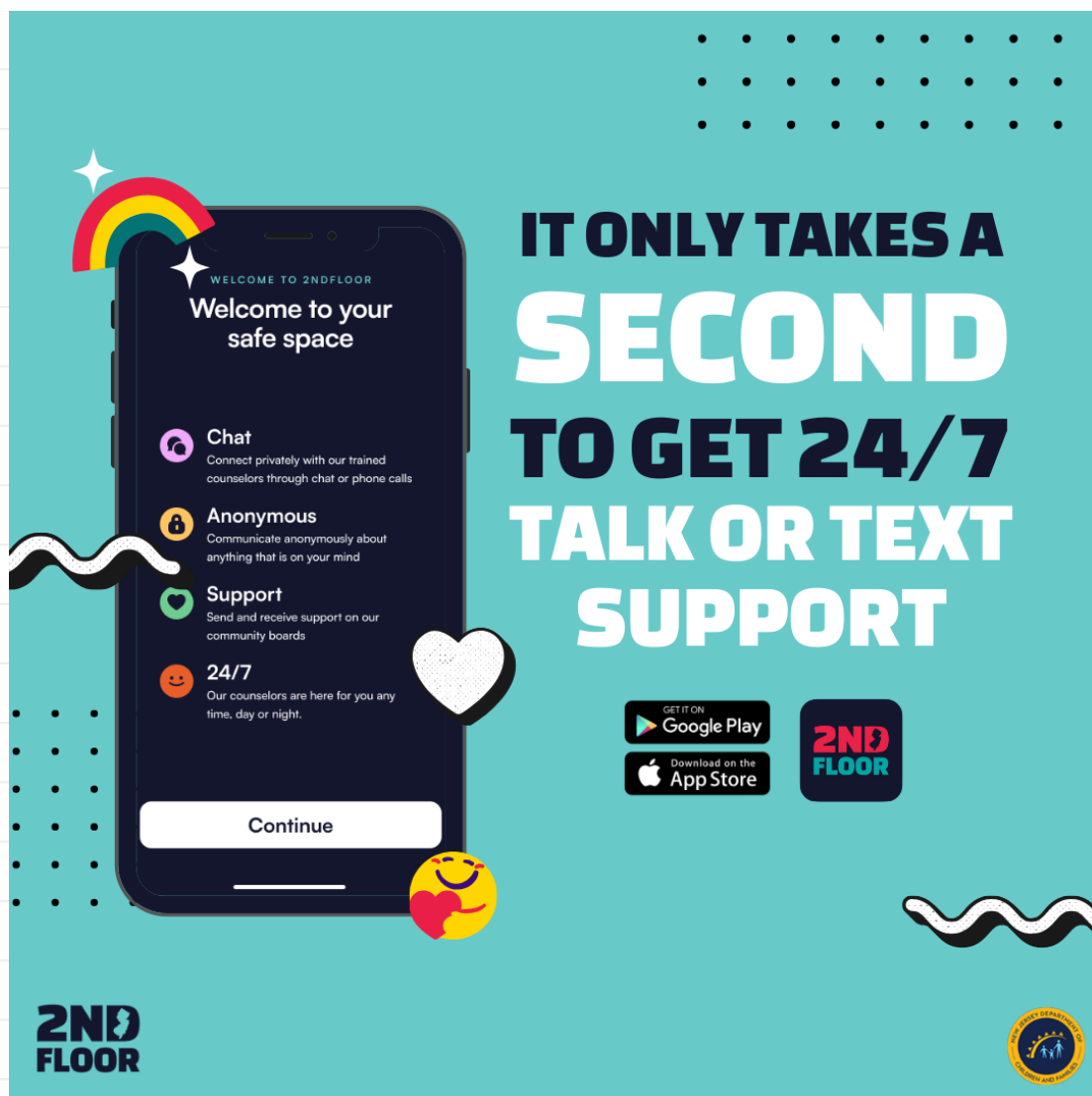


Email  
[ndellavecchia@ucesc.org](mailto:ndellavecchia@ucesc.org)



Our Location  
970 Suburban Rd. Union

The new **#2NDFLOOR app** for NJ youth is here! It only takes a second to get free 24/7 mental health support with one-on-one chat, helpline, community conversations, and more. Get started at [2NDFLOOR.org/download](https://2NDFLOOR.org/download) #mentalhealth #support.



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## *Understanding Supported Employment Options Available AFTER Graduation*



# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN NEW JERSEY

Supported Employment helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) secure and maintain **competitive employment**, or work in a setting to prepare for competitive employment. An individual's interests, likes, and dislikes are important factors when considering a job or career path.



## KEY TERMS

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Federal legislation signed in 2014 to help individuals access education, training, and support services to succeed in the workplace.

### **Competitive Employment**

Work performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting that is compensated at or above minimum wage.

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

The state agency which provides vocational services for individuals with IDD or other barriers to employment.

Check out our DVRS Go Bag: [bit.ly/DVRSGobag](http://bit.ly/DVRSGobag)

### "Employment First" State

An initiative that outlines that competitive employment is the preferred post-education activity. It presumes that all individuals, including people with IDD, are capable of integrated employment.

## EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

### • **Pre-Employment Transition Services**

- Offered to high school students to plan and prepare for entering the workforce.

### • **Job Development**

- Assists individuals with a job search, interview skills, and resume development.

### • **Job Sampling**

- Gives the individual the opportunity to explore different types of employment and identify areas of interest and ability.

### • **Job Coaching**

- Provides assistance with learning essential job tasks, transportation training, social skills, and can act as a liaison between the employer and employee.

### • **Long-Term Follow Along**

- Ongoing support through worksite visits designed to help individuals maintain skills built during job coaching.

### • **Trial Work Experience**

- A workplace readiness assessment administered by a Supported Employment provider agency, such as [Project HIRE](#).

\*This is not a fully inclusive list. Services may vary between agencies, school districts, and funding sources.

## REQUIREMENTS OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

### Wages

Individuals are compensated at or above minimum wage, and at a comparable rate to coworkers without IDD performing similar duties with similar experience and education.

### Benefits

Individuals receive the same benefits as other employees in a similar position with a similar level of service.

### Scheduling

The schedule is determined by the needs of the employer, not the availability of the individual.

### Integration

Employment takes place in a setting where individuals with and without disabilities have the opportunity to interact and work alongside each other.

### Advancement

The same opportunities for promotion and advancement are available for employees with and without disabilities in similar positions with similar experience.

## NJ WORKABILITY

NJ WorkAbility offers people with disabilities who are working, and whose income would otherwise make them ineligible for Medicaid, the opportunity to receive full Medicaid coverage.

Through NJ WorkAbility, individuals can earn up to \$65,196 of gross annual income and maintain less than \$20,000 in assets without threatening their Medicaid status. A couple cannot exceed \$87,900 in gross income and \$30,000 in assets. Learn more about NJ WorkAbility and eligibility requirements at: [bit.ly/njworkability](http://bit.ly/njworkability)

April 2022



### Supported Employment Fact Sheet Final.pdf

Click the link to download the attachment

Download

641.9 KB

## Guardianship Resources

At 18 years old all individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, reach the legal age of majority. This means that parents can no longer make decisions legally on behalf of their children. See the attached fact sheet from the Arc of New Jersey for more information about Guardianship and various alternative options.



### Updated Guardianship Fact Sheet (3).pdf

Download

107.0 KB



## About the Work Readiness Academy

The Work Readiness Academy serves students ages 18-21 with disabilities and provides a comprehensive employment training experience that incorporates both classroom-based instruction and community-based work-learning experiences. While in the

training classroom, students work cooperatively with similar aged peers to learn critical skills related to employment and socialization. Students also work on career exploration and planning, including the development of a person-centered, post-secondary vision and plan with clear goals and action steps. Program staff remain on-site during the internships to provide and fade support and assistance as needed. Students also participate in field trips focused on career discovery, independent living skills, recreation and independent travel training.

For more information or to make a student referral, please email Rachel Richer at [rreicher@ucesc.org](mailto:rreicher@ucesc.org)

**Email:** [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org)

**Website:** [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the\\_work\\_readiness\\_academy](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the_work_readiness_academy)

**Location:** [970 Suburban Road, Union, NJ, USA](#)

**Phone:** [908-633-2704](tel:908-633-2704)



**Click Here to Follow the  
WRA on Instagram!**



**WRA Smore**

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters



## Message from the Principal

*"Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude." Our little pink friend was grateful for the abundance he had in his life; great friends, a warm place to sleep, and a few tasty "haycorns" to eat.*

*-A. A. Milne, "Winnie The Pooh"*

In the spirit of this holiday season, we would like to extend our thanks to our dedicated, nurturing and wonderful staff for everything that you do for our students, families and school community. And to our parents, thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gift of all as well as your continued commitment and support towards our program all in the name of a teamwork approach.

December tends to be a very busy month! The cold weather moves in as we try to fit in many tasks, projects and events before the ending of the 2024 calendar year. This month was filled with a great amount of optimism, holiday spirit and joy sharing special themed days such as wearing festive hats and socks, cozy pajamas and of course the beloved fav. wearing your traditional "Ugly Holiday Sweater". Student created and staff donated gifts were sold by students for students to purchase during the "Holiday Winter Wonderland Extravaganza" held in





the gym as well as a competitive and creative holiday door decorating contest with prizes. The Westlake Parent Association presented a holiday Movie Night with snacks and refreshments at the school showing a modern day classic, Elf. And to wrap this most eventful month up, Our kind and generous neighbors, Saint Helen’s Church displayed incredible acts of kindness by granting students “Wish list” gifts donated by their parishioners and given out by Santa Claus himself!

As we enjoy the upcoming holidays, it is our sincerest wish that each and everyone of you have a truly unforgettable and special holiday surrounded by loved ones!

Till next “year” my friends, be good to yourself and each other!  
Claudine and Bobby P.



## Westlake Information

- Student enrollment: 52
- Student Referrals: 3
- Student’s accepted: 0
- Emergency Management Drills:
  - Fire Drill: December 10
  - Lockdown Drill: December 12



## December Spotlight!

Student of the Month!



## *Student of the Month*



S.W. everyday shows kindness in everything he does! She works hard in the cafeteria, at the Sunshine Cafe, and the classroom!

Principal's Award Winner!



## *Principal's Award*



We are so proud of J.G.! He was voted Principal Award Winner for his kindness to his friends and teachers!

**Staff Member of the Month!**





## *Staff Member of the Month*



Mr. Connor was voted Staff Member of the Month for his kindness to all. He not only supports his students but staff too. He helped redo all the Independent Work Schedule for his class!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!



We chose E.K. because he is a hard worker. He is always polite to everyone. And is always willing to jump in and help!



Holiday Sing-a-Long!

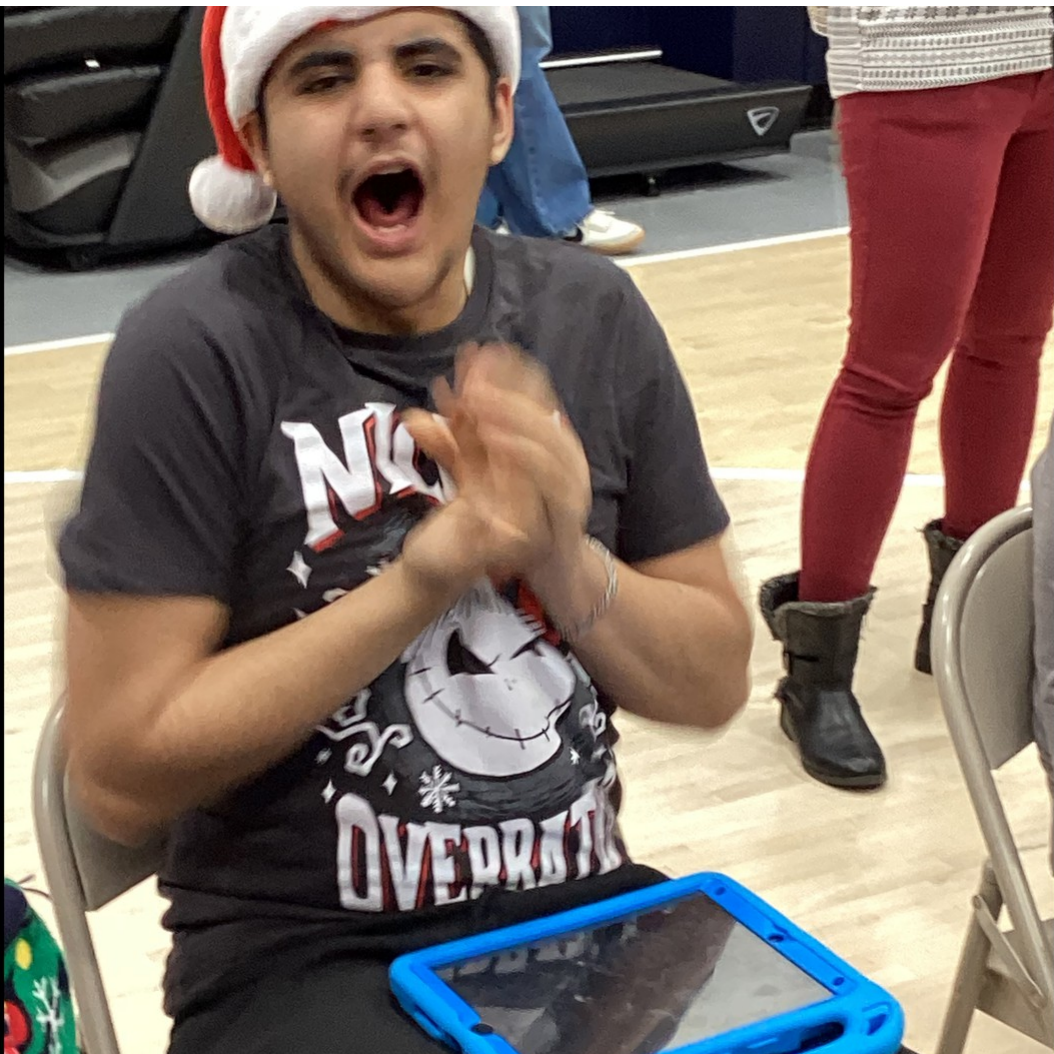




Our Holiday Sing-a-Long took place on December 19th. Mr. Patrick has been working with the students all month on our favorite holiday songs. Classes sang Jingle Bells, Let it Snow, Santa Claus is Coming to Town, All I Want for Christmas, Feliz Navidad, Jingle Bell Rock, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree. We also sang and had a dance party to Westlake favorite Sweet Caroline! The finale is always The Twelve Days of Christmas, with each class making decorations to represent their day!

Families were invited to join our sing-a-long. We were excited to show them all the songs we have been working on! Before and after the show the Sunshine Cafe and Christmas Pop Up Shop was open to families!











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The Holiday Sale!

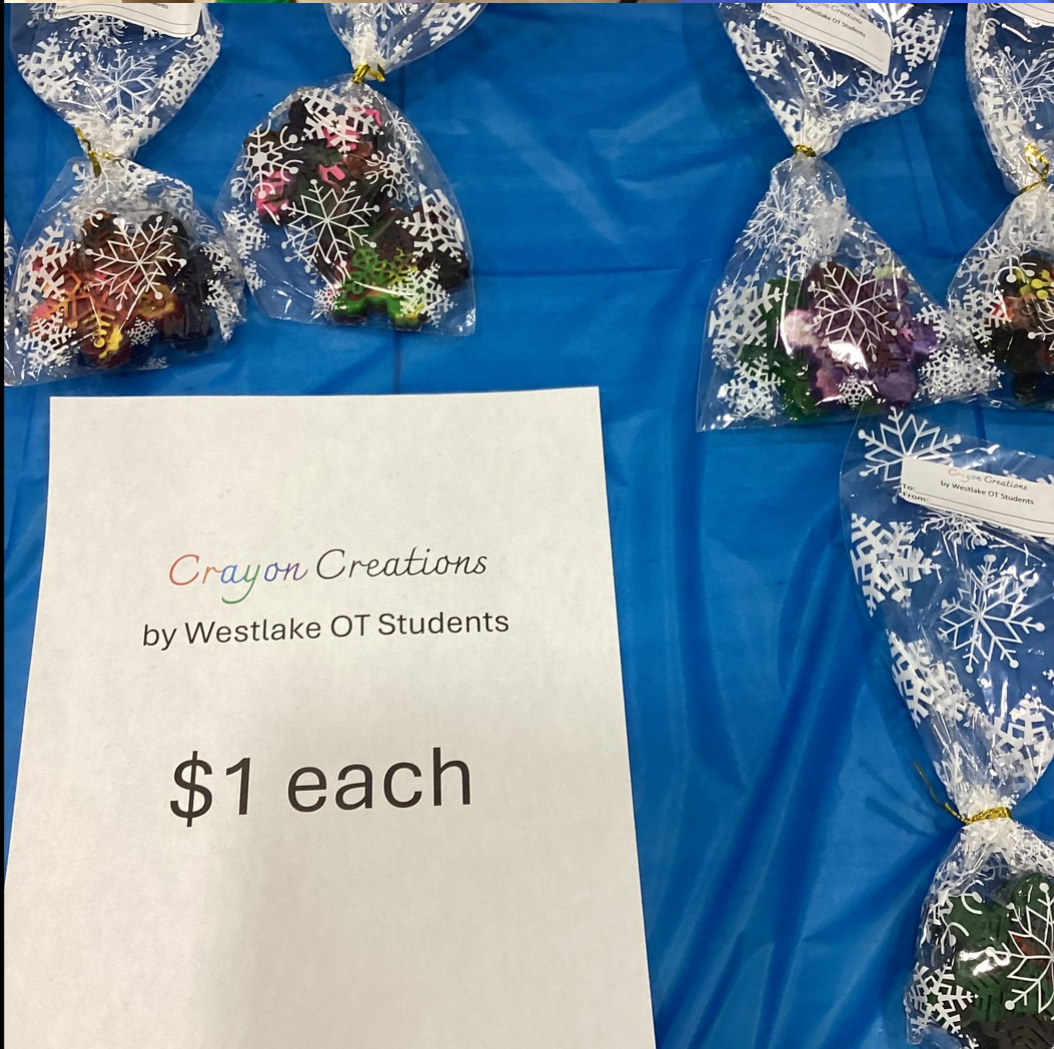




**The Holiday Sale took place on December 13th. Each class made gifts to sell. Staff and students from Westlake and Lambert's Mill Academy shopped for their family and friends. Ms. Dattilo stopped by to buy some gifts. She bought beautiful earrings!**









# The Sunshine Cafe!



The Westfield Service League



The Westfield Service League is a non-profit organization and consignment shop right here in downtown Westfield. It is all organized by volunteers who gift their profits through grants. Westlake was fortunate to receive a grant from the Westfield Service League in June of 2024, in the amount of \$2,505.00 towards the purchase of a deli style refrigerator for our school's "Sunshine Cafe."

The Sunshine Cafe is a student run Cafe at Westlake School, demonstrating student abilities and independence to work in the Cafe.

We were lucky enough to invite our guests from the Westfield Service League to see our students run cafe in action and see how their contribution has impacted student learning. Claudine Tantilto, Principal and Phyllis Sandroek, Social Worker met with Jane Francz, Susan McClelland, and Gigi Tilocca who came from the Westfield Service League. We greatly appreciate their grant donations over the years and the opportunity to work with our community partners. Please visit the Westfield Service League for more information!

<https://www.instagram.com/westfieldserviceleague/>

[instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)





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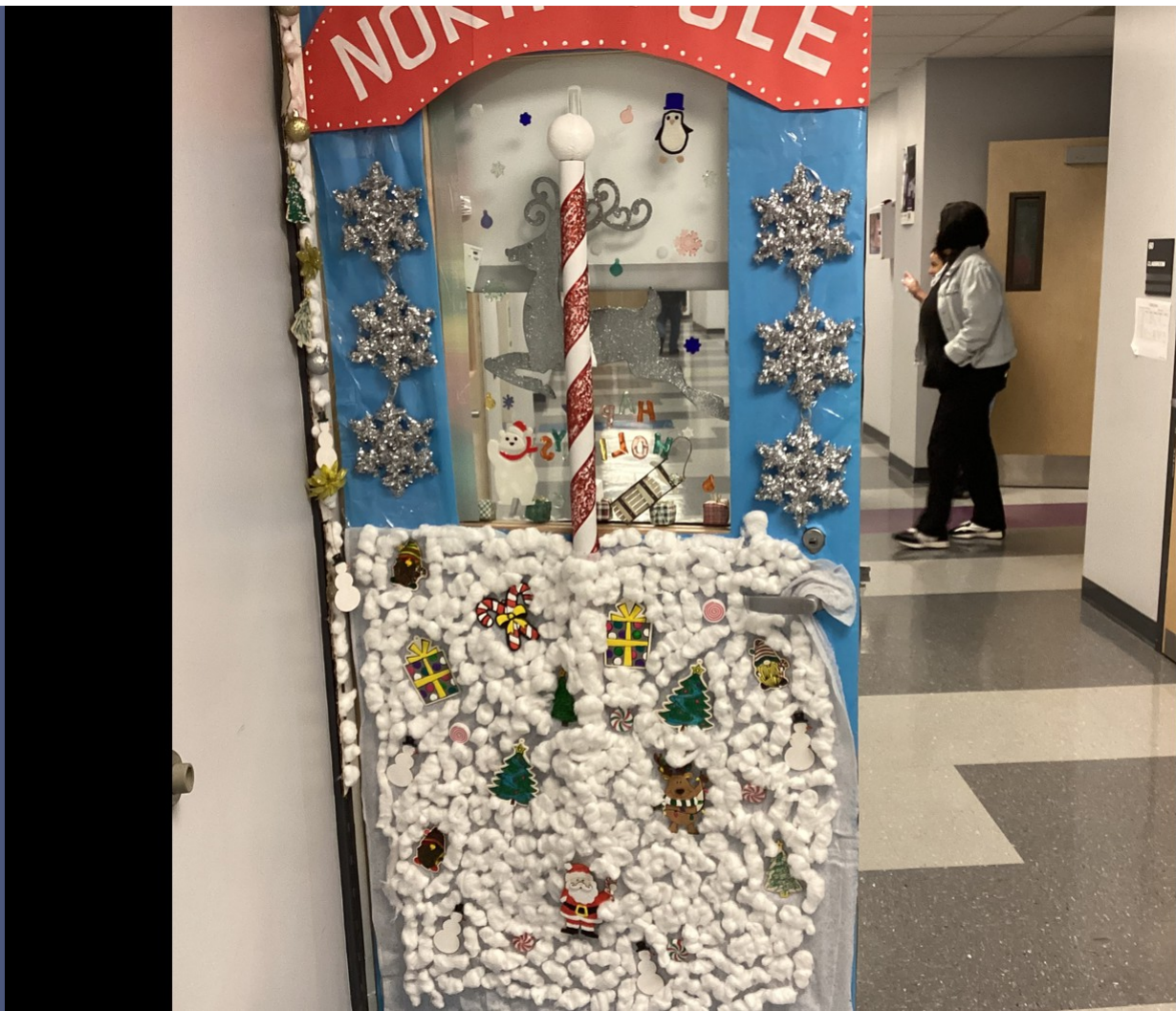
Door Decorating Contest!





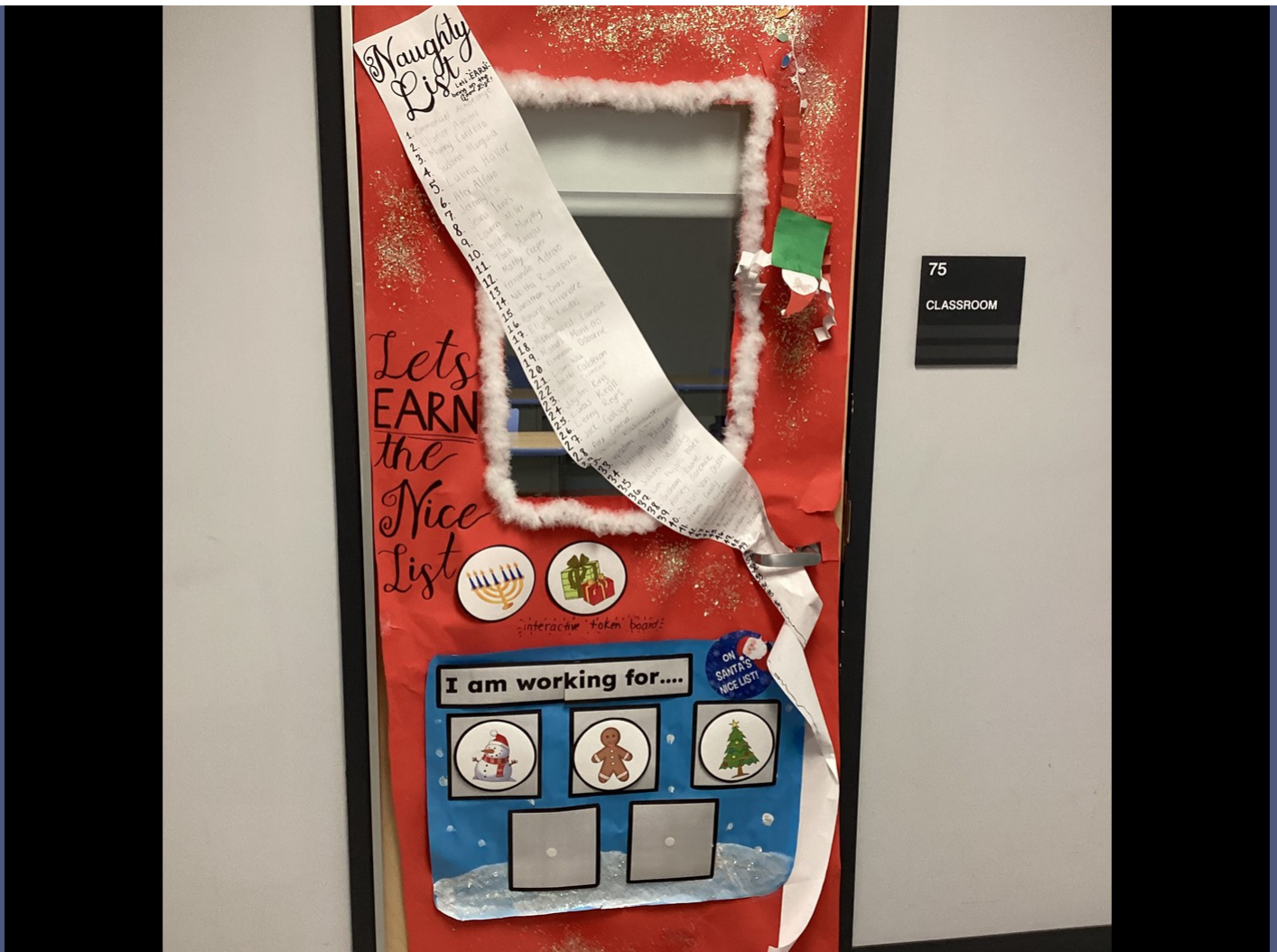
**Our Overall Winner Ms. Shaw's Class!**

Congratulations!



**Most Festive Mr.K's Class!**

Awesome Job!



**Most Creative Ms. Grace!**

I hope everyone made it to the Nice List!



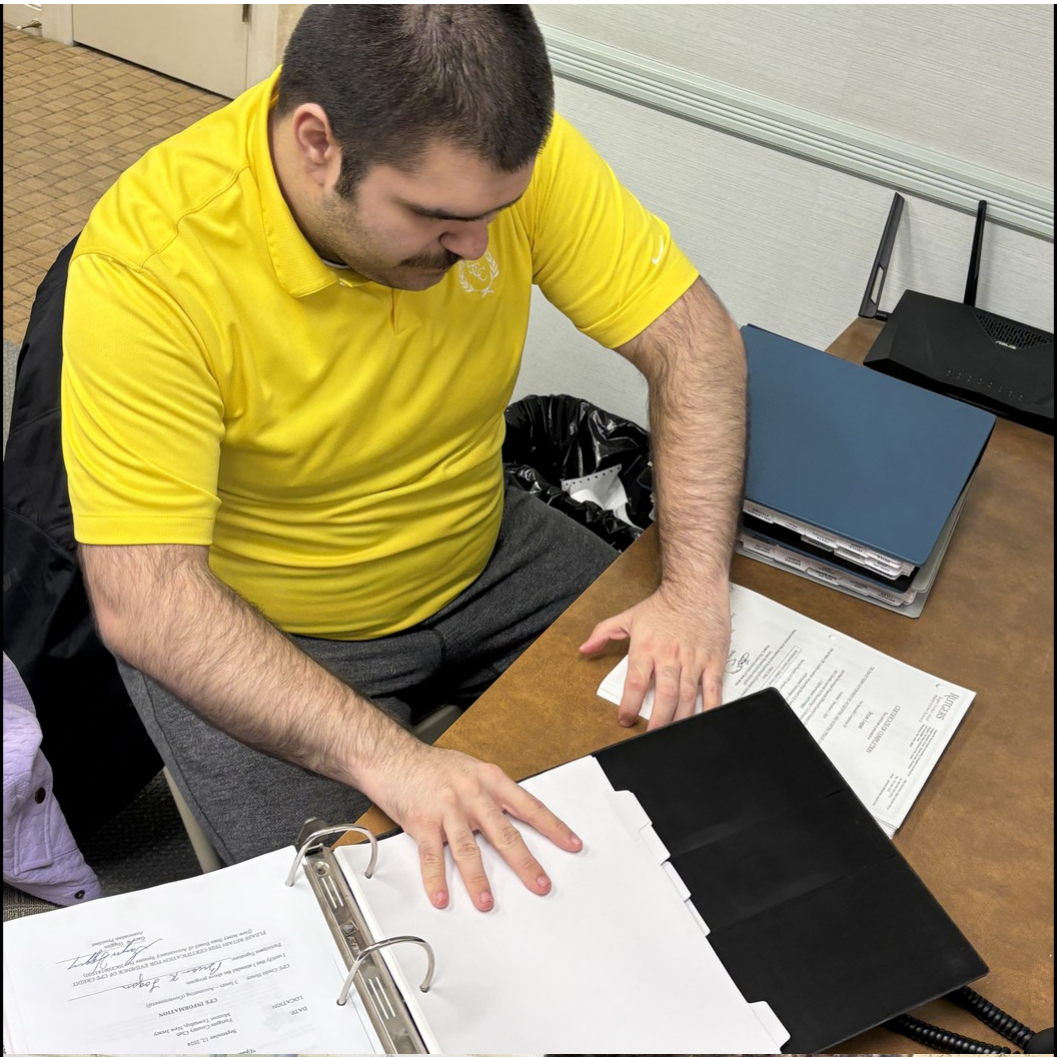
**Work Based Learning!**





**J.D. and M.K. continue to make amazing progress at the accounting firm! We are so proud of all of their hard work!**









Ms. Marshall's Class!





The students of w84 are looking forward to the Holidays. The class did not hesitate to dance and sing along at Holiday Express and especially loved visits by Elmo and Rudolph. In addition, we have been hard at work preparing for the December Holiday sale. They have been creating candy cane sleds and painting Santa pots to be filled with holiday hershey kisses. The students continue to participate in classroom work based learning by selling pizza and bagels to maintain a thriving business! Prior to winter break, we have introduced a new product, Make your own Duck Donuts.

The first round of sales was a huge hit!

Our students have been engaging in community based instructional opportunities including weekly trips to Shoprite. Our students are excelling at using self check-out and learning to locate items by reading and identifying the appropriate isles. Our ability to follow visual recipes while cooking has also come a long way as we are becoming more independent during these tasks.



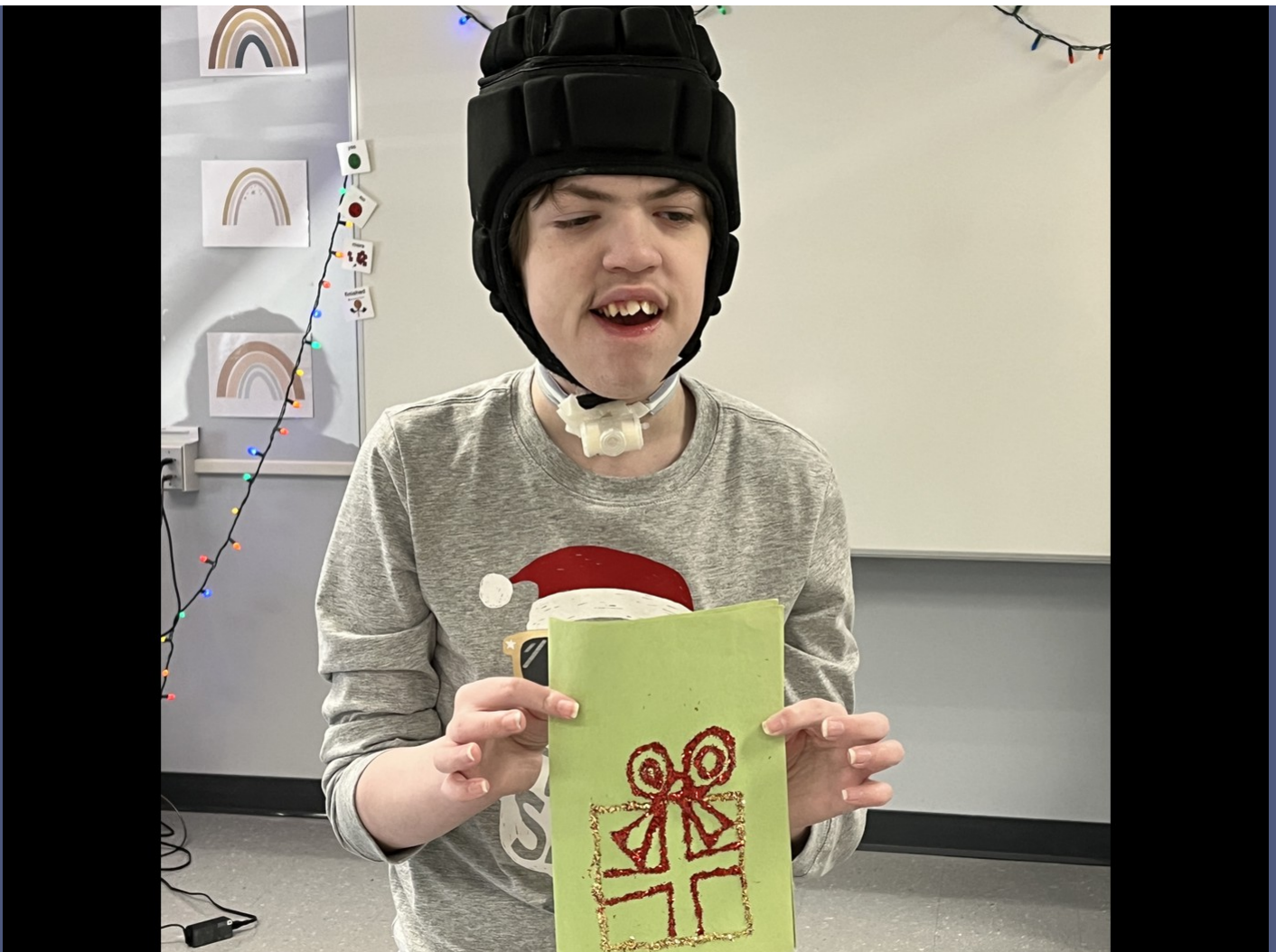






Ms. Sara's Speech Class!





As we approach the holiday season, it's been a busy and exciting month in speech therapy! We've been focusing on key communication skills, including the use of core words like "go" and "like," as well as engaging in holiday-themed activities that help reinforce these concepts in a fun and meaningful way. Using winter and holiday-themed books, we've been working on comprehension, sequencing, and answering questions about the story. In keeping with the theme of kindness this month, we've also been helping students create homemade holiday cards for classmates, teachers, and staff. This activity not only encourages creativity but also helps build social communication skills as students practice using kind words. As we head into the new year, we'll continue to focus on expanding core vocabulary and using speech and language in functional, real-life contexts. We'll also keep integrating seasonal themes and fun activities to keep students motivated and engaged in their speech and language learning. Wishing everyone a joyful and peaceful holiday season!



Ms. Mund's Class!



**Mrs. Mund's class has been busy learning and growing over the past few months, making memories and discovering new skills in the process! From community-based learning trips to hands-on activities in the classroom, here's a look at what we've been up to.**

**We kicked off our adventures with two exciting trips that took us out of the classroom and into the community. First, we visited the bowling alley, where we learned about teamwork, coordination, and maybe even a little friendly competition. The second trip took us to the movies, where we enjoyed a film and reflected on the experience together, all while practicing good movie theater etiquette.**

**Back in the classroom, we explored the world of cooking! One of our favorite activities was making simple but delicious snacks. We learned to prepare bread with butter and jelly—a simple yet tasty treat. We also had a blast icing our own cupcakes, using our creativity to make them as colorful and fun as possible!**

**Some of our students have been enjoying quiet moments of focus while working on puzzles, a great way to develop problem-solving skills and patience. But it's not all about calm activities! The class has been getting active, too. In Physical Education, we've been practicing our hockey skills, and some of us are already becoming expert players!**

**One of the highlights of our days is the visit from the Pet Therapy dogs. These lovable pups come to visit regularly, and we can't get enough of the licks and cuddles they offer. It's the perfect way to unwind and feel relaxed during our busy days.**

**As the holiday season approached, we got into the festive spirit by decorating our classroom Christmas tree. We worked together to hang beautiful ornaments that were hand made. As we wrap up this busy season, we're excited for more fun and learning in the months to come.**











Ms. Caryn from the Behavior Department!



This holiday season a local seventh grader, Rayna Davidson created “sensory fanny packs” for local students in need as a service project. She donated 30 fanny packs to Westlake School, and 250 in total to local schools as well as sending some overseas to Israeli children. The sensory packs include various items that our students use to help self regulate and refocus both in their classrooms as well as out in the community on community based field trips. Some of the items included stress balls, pop tubes and pop-it keyrings, putty, a timer, and bubbles. In addition, our students often use their fanny packs to carry individual reinforcing items to earn when traveling around the school or in the community. The students store important visual supports needed when they are on the go, allowing them to learn how to manage and utilize their own materials and increase independence.







# WolfPack Press

For this edition of the Wolf Pack Press, I interviewed my friend Jacob.  
We have a lot in common. I would like you to get to know Jacob too.

Jacob is 10 years old and has been at Westlake since 2023.  
He likes watching videos on his Ipad & playing with a bouncing ball.

When I asked him what he likes about Westlake, he told me that it is fun.

During winter break, he plans to play video games with his sister and get the game Subnautica for Christmas.

Jacob recommends the movie, The Grinch, because it teaches you how to be kind, and how to have fun.

His favorite food is pizza & rice, and his favorite subject is math.

Jacob is Dominican, and he likes to be polite to people.

I hope you now know more about jacob.

I hope everyone has a Happy Holiday and enjoys the winter break!

Reporter, Recorder, Editor: Jonathan Diaz



Parent Resource!



## PARENT WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ALL WORKSHOPS BEGIN  
AT 7PM!



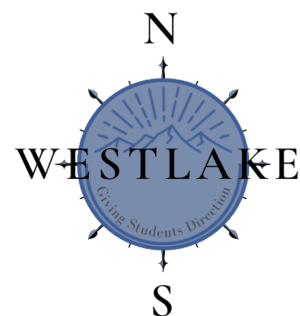
To register for any of the events above please email [Phyllis Sandrock](mailto:PhyllisSandrock@ucesc.org) at [psandrock@ucesc.org](mailto:psandrock@ucesc.org)

## Contact Us!

**Website:** [www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake\\_school](http://www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school)

**Location:** [1571 Lamberts Mill Rd, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

**Phone:** [908-232-4181](tel:908-232-4181)



## INSTAGRAM!

Visit us!



**Robert Peneno**

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





# Hillcrest North December 2024 MR

December 2024

## Principal's Message

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Dear Hillcrest Academy North Campus (HAN) Students and Families:

The month of December was a very exciting time at HAN. Students have really balanced celebrating the holidays and engaging in their academics productively. The new 3D printer has been working non-stop in the main office with projects that students have been working on with Ms. Goldenberg. Students also attended an assembly on "Grief and Loss" where they learned

a great deal about this tough topic. It's been very evident this month that students are connecting and assisting one another in the classrooms in a myriad of ways. That connection piece is so important to the culture here at HAN and something that we are very proud of.

I wish everyone the very best during the holiday season and look forward to seeing students return in 2025 with motivation and determination in reaching their personal and academic goals.

Keep it up, HAN!

Please feel free to contact our main office with any questions.

Sincerely,

John Marquet  
Principal

## Monthly Data

Enrolled - 84

Accepted - 5

Disenrolled - 0

Fire Drill - December 18th

Lockdown Drill - December 12th

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## Upcoming Dates

January 1 - No School - New Year's Day

January 2 - Back to School

January 13 - Half Day - Staff Development

January 20 - No School - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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## Monthly Awards



# PRINCIPAL'S AWARDS



**Honor Roll for Marking  
Period 1**



**November's Principal  
Awards**



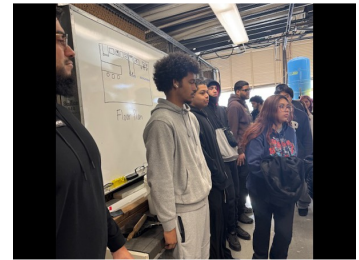
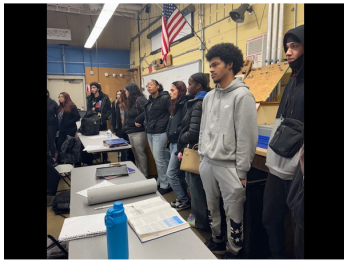
**Perfect Attendance  
Awards for November**

## Teacher Spotlight

### Mrs. Goldenberg's trip to Vo-Tech

The students were excited to attend the Union County Vocational-Technical School! The students remained engaged and participated in open Q&A sessions. Some students showed interest in attending the adult program.





## Student Voice and Empowerment

Students attended a virtual information session for Healthcare Professionals through JFK Muhlenberg.



Justin Montoya has been designing a chess board and pieces using HAN's 3D printer.





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## Restorative Circles



The restorative circle is a really good way to connect with people in my class, including my teacher. Being able to have my voice heard by my fellow classmates and the staff feels like a breath of fresh air. Being able to talk about personal things and other people being able to do the same, shows our teachers care very much about their students.

Mia Salerno

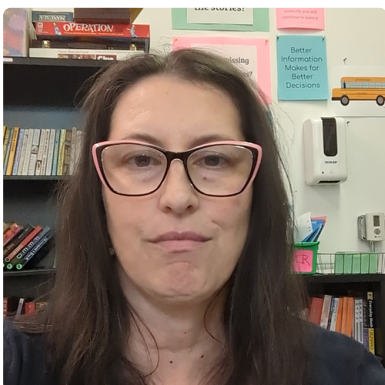
The thing I liked about the restorative circle was getting to know my classmates a little more and knowing that they feel safe to open up about the tough topics that we talked about.

Na'Kyrh Alaracon



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## In the Classroom



**Jessica Lederman, English Teacher**

In English we have been reviewing literary elements and how they, in combination, connect to a story. We have discussed how the most memorable stories express both a need and a want for their characters, which exemplifies how plot, theme, conflict, setting, and point of view are all necessary and work together to create a story worth telling.

In Media Literacy we have been discussing how Socrates' Rhetoric Triangle and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs are used in advertising. We are currently discussing bias and the different types of bias. We will soon look at how bias in the media affects how we learn about news and what we can do about it.

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## Maria Prieto, School Nurse

The health office has been busy this month with several new students entering Hillcrest Academy North. Mrs. Prieto attended a Union County Health Department zoom meeting regarding an overview of required immunizations for New Jersey's K-12 students, record keeping and what communicable diseases are on the rise in Union County. She also attended a zoom webinar conducted by Rutgers University School of Public Health summarizing the 2024 Opioid crisis in NJ and how the year ended. Lastly, she has been assisting one of our students with gathering information on how to become a scrub tech.



## Spirit Week

HAN students and staff celebrated their second Spirit Week of the school year: the week of December 16-20. Again, the staff was dominating in spirit, but there were some students who brought it everyday! Thanks to all those who participated, and we look forward to doing another with more student participation.

## Holiday Gear Day



## Ugly Sweater Day

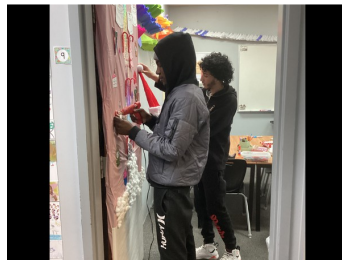


## Grinch Day





## Door Decorating



## STOPit Solutions

Students and staff were introduced to STOPit Solutions, a program that allows students and staff to report any concerns about unsafe, harmful, or inappropriate behavior to the HAN Safety Team. Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to download the STOPit App onto their phones.



## About HAN

Hillcrest Academy North assists students from the Elizabeth Public School District in reaching their full potential by providing an alternative to the traditional high school setting. We offer smaller class sizes with a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum that is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and prepares students for college and career. Our goal is





to provide a safe, supportive, and empowering school environment that fosters lifelong learning, mutual respect, creativity, and the joy of learning, with an effective, caring, innovative staff, in partnership with home and the community.

Mr. John Marquet, Principal

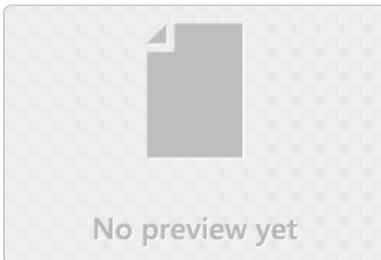
Mr. Thomas Van Cleef, Supervisor of Instruction

Location: [2630 Plainfield Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2630+Plainfield+Ave,+Scotch+Plains,+NJ+07076)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

Website: [https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest\\_academy\\_north](https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north)

## Visit Us On Instagram



### Mission Statement

It is the mission of Hillcrest Academy North that all graduates have demonstrated the following attributes: Responsibility and accountability for themselves by routinely producing quality work through high academic standards now and in the future A sense of pride in who they are and what they can contribute as a

[ucesc.org](https://ucesc.org)



**John Marquet**

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





## December Monthly Report Data

Enrollment-97 (as of 12/20/24).

New Students-4

Disenrollments-2 (GED and Conduct).

Emergency Drill-12/12/24.

Fire Drill-12/10/24.

## A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, happy holidays, and a very happy New Year! Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS) had a great December. Staff worked with students on their individualized Student Success Plans, instituted a tutoring program, and had a number of events planned. Please continue with reviewing this newsletter and enjoy all the wonderful things occurring at HAS.



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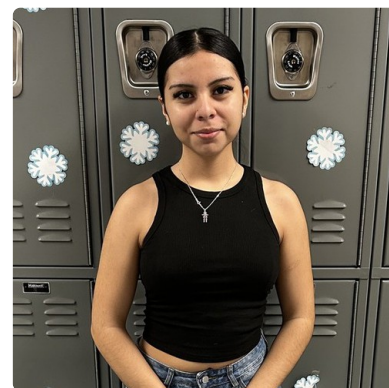
## December Important Dates

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 Beginning of Spirit Month	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Student Success Plan Day	11	12	13 Candy Grams Due	14
15	16 NJ4S Assembly	17 HAS/LMA Basketball Tournament	18 NJ4S Assembly	19 -NJ4S Assembly -Faculty Secret Snowman	20 -Movie Day -Early Dismissal -Start of Winter Break	21
22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas	26 -1st night of Hanukkah -Kwanzaa	27	28
29	30	31 New Years Eve				

## Student of the Month

### December - Keilyn

Congratulations to Keilyn for being our overall Student of the Month! She has worked hard and been very dedicated in her classes to receive this honor. Keep up the excellent work!



## Faculty "Getting to Know You"!

### Mr Shandroff's Favorites:

Favorite movie: A Bronx Tale or Apocalypto

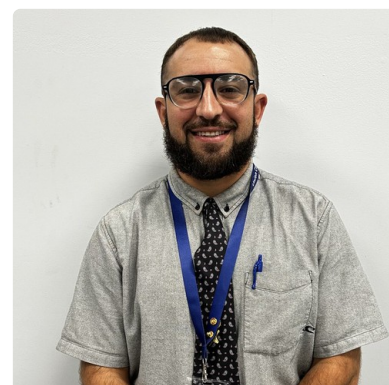
Favorite food: Pizza

Favorite color: Purple

Favorite book: Everyday Holiness by Alan Morinis

Favorite travel spot: Iceland or Thailand

Favorite shows: Curb Your Enthusiasm, Impractical Jokers, Breaking Bad, Game of Thrones, and Vikings





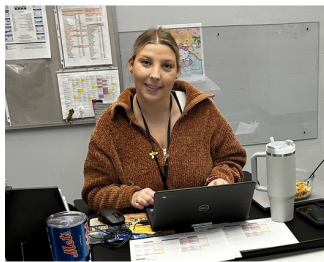
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# "Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions

## December - Design

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower", teachers are awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The December theme was 'Design'. As role models for our students, it is important to be an example of what empowerment looks like and how we can empower others to do the same.

The faculty/staff picked for this month's honor, has shown what great purpose and planning can yield. Congratulations!



**Mrs Schulhafer**



**Mrs Flores**



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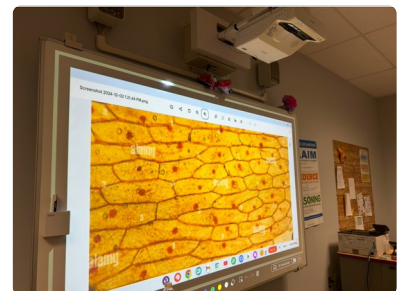
## Teacher's Corner:

### Mrs Arora - Biology/Forensics

**Biology:** Students covered the *Microscope* and *Cell Transport* units. They learned how to use a microscope and studied the function of each part. After mastering the basics, they participated in a hands-on virtual lab to practice these skills. Students also prepared their own onion cell and cheek cell slides, gaining firsthand experience in microscopy techniques.

In the *Cell Transport* unit, students explored how oxygen, nutrients, and wastes move through the cell membrane in the human body using diffusion, facilitated diffusion, osmosis, and active transport. To deepen their understanding, they conducted potato experiments, analyzing osmosis and diffusion. Classroom discussions connected these concepts to real-life applications such as why plants cannot grow on the beach and why pasta sauce develops mold after five days in the refrigerator even when stored properly.

**Forensic Science:** In the *Forensic Anthropology* unit, students studied the 206 bones in the human body and their significance pertaining to investigations. They learned how forensic anthropologists analyze human remains and burial contexts to uncover critical evidence, such as determining the identity of the deceased, the cause of death, and the time since death. To help memorize the bones, students watched various videos and listened to educational songs.

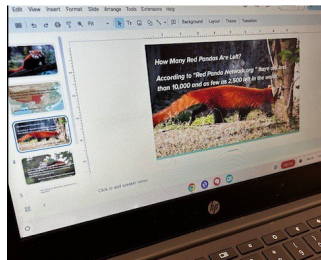
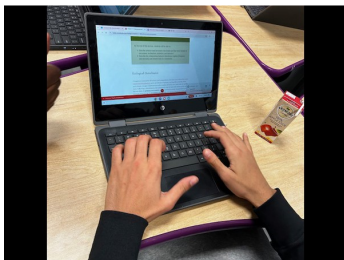
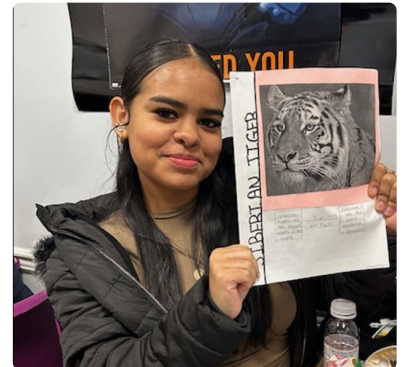




## Mr Lund - Environmental/Computer Science

**Environmental:** This month, students worked on creating pamphlets that promoted saving endangered animals. Each student researched an animal chosen at random so that all animals had a fair chance to receive an advocate on behalf of their survival and recovery.

**Computer Science:** Students worked on Interactive Animations and Games in an online resource called code. org. Students had an opportunity to write about and discuss the future of AI based on an article in Scholastic Magazine titled "The Bright Side and the Dark Side of AI."



## Holiday Spirit Days

During the month of December we all focused on the themes of kindness, patience, and holidays around the world. As a way to spread kindness and cheer, HAS celebrated the holidays with a whole month of School Spirit days! Students had the opportunity to dress up every day to earn a special treat once we get back from winter break and a special prize for the student that dressed up the most!

### Week 1

December 2nd-6th





### Monochromatic Monday

Wear an outfit that consists of only one color



### Turtleneck/Tie Tuesday

Wear a turtleneck or holiday tie



### Way back Wednesday

Wear an outfit from another decade



### Don't Sweat the Holidays

Wear your favorite sweats outfit



### National Sock Day

Wear funky socks

## Week 2

December 9th-13th



### Let it snow

Wear something winter/snow themed, or blue and white



### Keeping Cozy

Wear your favorite scarf/knit wear



### Sporty Wednesday

Wear sports gear from your favorite winter sport



### Mad for Plaid

Wear your favorite plaid or flannel items



### Ugly Sweater day

Wear your ugliest holiday sweater

## Week 3

December 16th-20th



### Neon Monday

Be the brightest light this holiday season and wear neon



### Holiday Accessory Day

Wear your holiday hat, earrings, lights etc



### Summer in December

Wear a vacation/summer outfit



### Holiday Colors

Wear red/green, blue/white, green/black/red

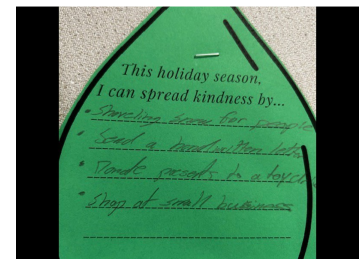
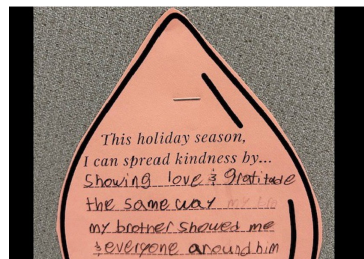
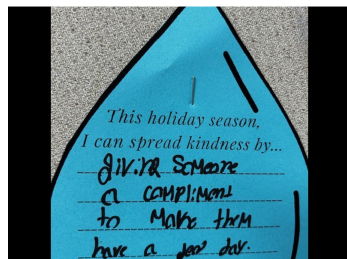


### Night Before Christmas

Pajama Day!

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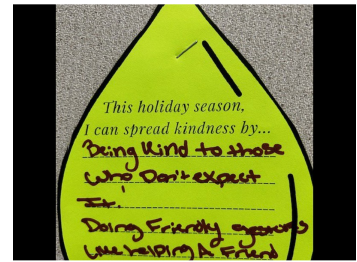
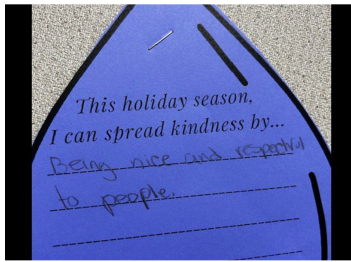
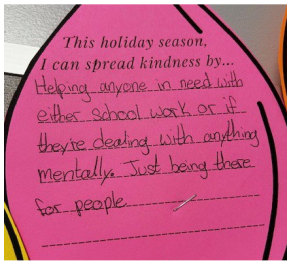
## Be a Shining Light



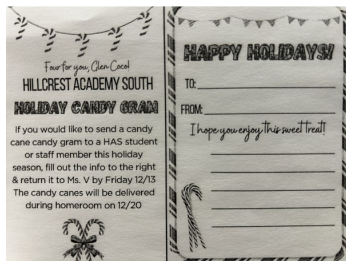
In keeping with the theme of kindness, students were asked, "How could you be a shining light for others and spread kindness this season?". Colorful paper lightbulbs were filled out with the students' reply and they were hung up to "light" HAS's hallway and inspire others to spread kindness.







## Holiday Festivities



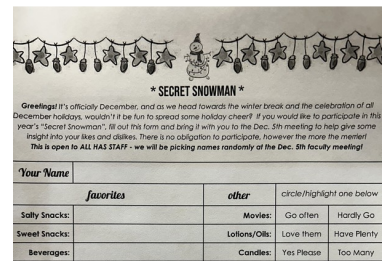
### Candygrams!

Students and faculty were given the opportunity to fill out candygram forms so that their friends/teachers/students can receive a candy cane on the last day of school before break.



### Holidays Around the World

Mrs Flores' Spanish classes got to explore how different countries around the world celebrate the holidays. From the specific holidays that get celebrated like Christmas and Hanukkah to the traditions that may not be commonly known, students created ornaments and snowflakes depicting many of them.



### Faculty Secret Snowman

Faculty and staff filled out the special Secret Snowman form which was then folded and put in a bucket. One by one, everyone picked a name from the bucket to get a holiday gift for. Remember though, it's a secret!

## The Gift That Gives

As a thank you for all the snacks and beverages purchased, the Westlake Sunshine Cafe gifted HAS students with vouchers for the cafe. Every day at lunch, HAS students have the opportunity to purchase cookies, chips, ramen, pizza pockets, soda, iced tea/coffee, and other goodies that the cafe provides. Not only does this benefit HAS students, but it help provides the students of Westlake an opportunity to practice people skills as well as work/money skills. Thank you so much Westlake Sunshine Cafe for the generous holiday gift!





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## Let Every Voice Empower Mural

As part of our district-wide project, each UCESC staff member and student created a tile to express their voices. Those tiles were then collected, mixed together, then picked at random for each school to create a mural. This month, those tiles were distributed back to each school in the district where they are currently displayed. Now each school is connected not just by our district, but also by each school having a little piece of the other schools within their halls.



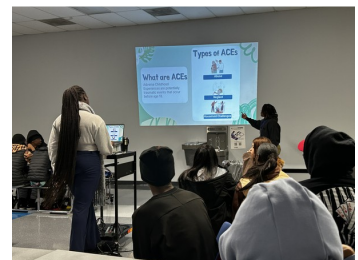
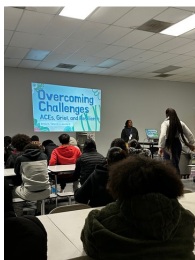




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## NJ4S Assembly - Grief and Loss

NJ4S is no stranger to HAS. They were here earlier this year to present and talk to students on mental health. Now they came back to discuss the topic of grief and loss. Loss can come in many forms; breakups of romantic or friend relationships, jobs, homes, passing of loved ones, etc. Loss can be very traumatic to high school students and knowing that there are ways cope and people to turn to is very important. Thank you Mrs. Ramirez for organizing this helpful assembly!



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## Students Outside of School

### Portrait of an Artist!

Alex is a very talented portrait artist. When he was younger, his father taught him how to draw the iconic Sonic the Hedgehog. After that he was hooked on drawing and has been doing it ever since. He draws whenever he gets the chance whether it is at home, at school, or out and about. Alex loves drawing because it's a form of expressing himself and he has a lot of passion for it. He feels it's a skill that's hard yet rewarding to learn.





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## About Us

Hillcrest Academy South Campus is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public School District. Students are referred to HAS by their Elizabeth Academy guidance counselor and administration for an interview at HAS. We provide a small educational learning setting with opportunities to make up courses through our Credit Retrieval Program in a caring environment in order to meet Elizabeth's graduation requirements.

**Website:** [www.ucesc.org](http://www.ucesc.org)

**Instagram:** [ucesc\\_has](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_has)

**Facebook:** [Hillcrest Academy South](https://www.facebook.com/HillcrestAcademySouth)

**Location:** [1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B](#)

**Phone:** [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

Visit us on Instagram



**HAS Smore**

HAS is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



# Lamberts Mill Academy

December Monthly Report 2024



- *"December, being the last month of the year, cannot help but make us think of what is to come." – Fennel Hudson*

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## Administrators' Message

### December 2024

Good Morning,

We hope this newsletter finds you well! The month of December, although only having 14.5 school days, felt like LMA staff and students we're immersed in student activity and care every single day! Although a short month, LMA is proud of all the different activities that continue to take place, building on a strong school culture and increase student voice. LMA's Student Council is now running on 'all cylinders' with weekly meetings taking place, mapping out different student activities. In addition to Student Council; LMA students have participated in a creative art field trip, participated in informative assemblies from UCVTS and KEAN University, and also taking part in the 1st annual Hillcrest Academy/Lamberts Mill Academy Holiday Basketball tournament. Lastly, LMA students and staff have been participating in a number of different holiday traditions infused in academic classes including card making, creating holiday ornaments, holiday food making and decorating the halls of LMA to get in the festive spirit.





Please take some time to read through our monthly newsletter to see all the student achievement and activities at LMA. Keep in mind that although LMA is part of the Union County Educational Services Commission, LMA is working with sending districts outside of Union county as our enrollment grows so does our connections with sending districts, both inside and outside of Union county. These relationships and connections are what we pride ourselves on.

If you have any questions about LMA, please feel free to reach out.

On behalf of the entire LMA school community, we wish everyone a Happy Holiday, and Healthy New Year!

Reed & John

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## Monthly Data

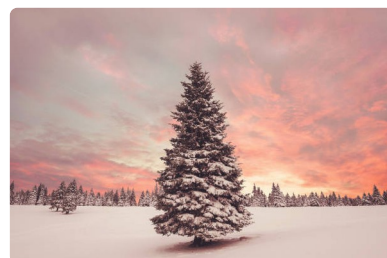
1. Enrollment - 43
2. Acceptances - 3
3. New Students - 0
4. Intakes - 4
5. Referrals - 2
6. Disenrollments - 1
7. Fire Drill - 12/10/2024
8. Other Drill EM: (Lockdown, Internal Threat) 12/12/2024

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## Upcoming Events

### January 2025 Important Dates

January 1 - NO SCHOOL - New Year's Day  
January 13 - Early Dismissal 1pm (Students)  
January 14 - Ace's Grief & Loss Student Assembly @ 1571  
January 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)  
January 27 - LMA Field Trip - Liberty Hall Museum



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## Staff Spotlight

### Mrs. Delgado - TA

Mrs. Delgado is in her first academic school year providing services for LMA students within our Post Graduate Program. Although in her first school year as a teacher assistant role, she has

exhibited tremendous leadership, organizational and collaborative skills. Her strong interpersonal skills with LMA students and staff make her a great addition to the LMA team!

Here are her five facts from Mrs. Delgado:

I am a musician, I play flute and cello in two community orchestras.

I love animals.

I crochet and knit.

I love to read.

I am working on my post baccalaureate in Special Education

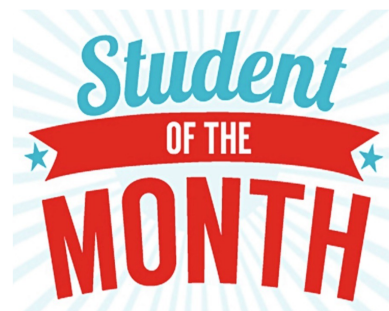


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## LMA Student of the Month - December 2024

### Samantha G.

LMA staff came together to vote on the December Student of the Month. Samantha G. received the most votes based on her growth and performance in academic classes. Samantha is a fantastic student! She always comes to class prepared and ready to learn. She's a great contributor to class discussions, and she's always willing to help her classmates. Samantha is a pleasure to have in class, and has served as a great role model for her peers. Congratulations, Samantha!

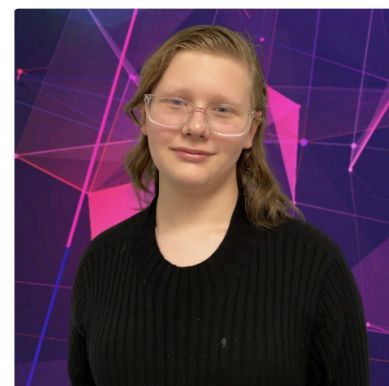


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## Student Voice! - Student Council

### Narrative by Jordyn M.

The LMA Student Council has come up with many new student initiatives, including new school fund-raising projects, and more school student involvement activities. At the student council, we have hosted a student initiated bake sale, and currently have a Lamberts Mill Academy activity day coming up right before the Holiday break. After surveying students we are planning, an LMA Student Council sponsored Field Trip Escape Room, along with a school wide movie day. We strive at LMA to provide only the best opportunities for our students. At the Student Council, we have weekly meetings, in order to show our dedication to our students. During our weekly meetings, our VP, Secretary, Historian, Treasurer and class representatives discuss and take notes on how to improve the student experience at LMA. On behalf of the newly formed LMA Student Council, we wish all readers a Happy and Healthy New Year! Follow us at The Mill, to see our student council initiatives for 2025!





# STUDENT COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT, Jordyn M.



## Classroom Spotlights



### Ms. Finver's ELA classes gets hands on

Students have begun Unit II Narratives determining themes in various texts and clips. Incorporating this month's theme of patience, students read how to make candy canes where it discussed how much patience it takes to make them. We then made peppermint bark to embrace patience and the holiday season. Students also created holiday cards to hand out to people. Lastly we collaborated with staff and students making a building wide "hands" Christmas tree.



### Updates from Ms. York's WIN Class

This month in WIN we continued to read The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens and reflected how to apply this new information to our everyday lives. We discussed how time management and organization impact our ability to succeed in the classroom, at home and in the community. We participated in our restorative circles each Friday. Students now help prepare for circles by independently retrieving the talking piece, rules and then arranging the chairs. We have had a 100% participation rate for circles this month! Students helped cut out our new LMA snowflake "shout outs" and created a winter wonderland bulletin board where they will be displayed. Students helped hang the tiles from the UCESC district-wide



### Musical updates from The Mill

In music, students have been busy learning keyboard skills and reading the grand staff. Students have learned some Holiday and seasonal songs as well to be shared amongst one another. This unit builds on their rhythmic knowledge from the last unit, and gives them more opportunities to express themselves musically. Discussions have taken place on how different holiday music can shift and alter moods, and how it connects with the Zones of Regulation from the first marking period.



collaboration project across  
from the main office.

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## Splatter Craze

On December 9, LMA Clinician, Mr. Julian Leal, Teacher Assistant, Ms. Melissa Stenger, and 8 students attended a trip to Splatter Craze. Splatter Craze is a unique and recreational art studio where participants are encouraged to unleash their inner artist through the exciting experience of splattering paint. This form of art can be very therapeutic as it provides people an opportunity for creativity, stress relief, and emotional expression. Here is what students had to say:

"I really enjoyed the trip. I saw a lot of people open up and show a side of themselves that you wouldn't normally see." - RH

"I like how we got to paint and splatter. It gave me a different view on art." - IW





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## Lamberts Mill Academy -Hillcrest Academy South Holiday Basketball Tournament



On Tuesday, 12/17, Lamberts Mill Academy and Hillcrest Academy South (Both UCESC high schools) joined forces to host the 1st Annual LMA/HAS Holiday Basketball Tournament. LMA and HAS students mixed together on 3 person teams playing in a round robin of games. This gave all students a tremendous opportunity to work together, while showing off their basketball skills to one another. All students enjoyed the tournament, and have appropriately advocated to have additional tournaments throughout the school year.

Thank you to all the LMA and HAS staff members who had a hand in planning this unified basketball tournament.

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## LMA students learn about Post-Secondary Opportunities from UCVTS

On December 2, Ms. Lisa Tauscher, Principal of Union County Post-Secondary Programs, came and spoke to our high school students about learning a trade after graduation. Some trades that the



program offers are Automotive Technology, Cosmetology, Culinary, Electrical Technology, and Plumbing/HVAC. Students learned about what is needed to become a part of the program and how learning further about this trade can set them up for success and a career in the future!



## Clinical Corner -End of the Year Reflections & New Beginnings

2024 has been a whirlwind of emotions and experiences. What a better way to start the new year with some fresh resolutions and perspectives. Have a vision! Setting goals for 2025 is an opportunity to shape our future.

This begins with setting small measurable goals which leads to accomplishing larger goals such as:

- 1.Improve study habits by getting organized with a planner
- 2.Prioritize sufficient sleep, exercise, and a balanced diet
3. Find new coping skills to help with future stressful situations
- 4.Limiting distractions by cutting down on technology use
5. Identifying and building a solid support system

Remember, it's okay to make mistakes. In fact, they can be valuable learning experiences. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Reach out to your friends, family, teachers, and clinicians.



They're there to support you.

With hard work, dedication, and a positive mindset, you can achieve your goals and make 2025 a year of growth and success.

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## LMA 'The Mill' Merch

*Show your LMA Pride!*



If you would like to buy your own The Mill T-shirt for the upcoming Holiday season, you can order directly from the Custom Ink below.



### Custom Ink Design 'lma24'

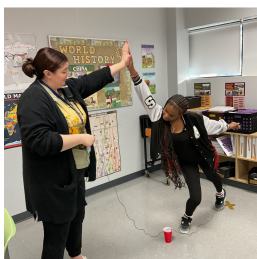
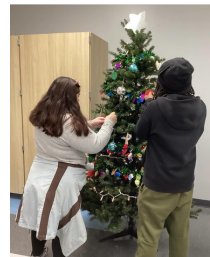
View this Custom Ink design, make changes, share it with friends, or order for yourself.

[customink.com](https://www.customink.com)



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## December at The Mill

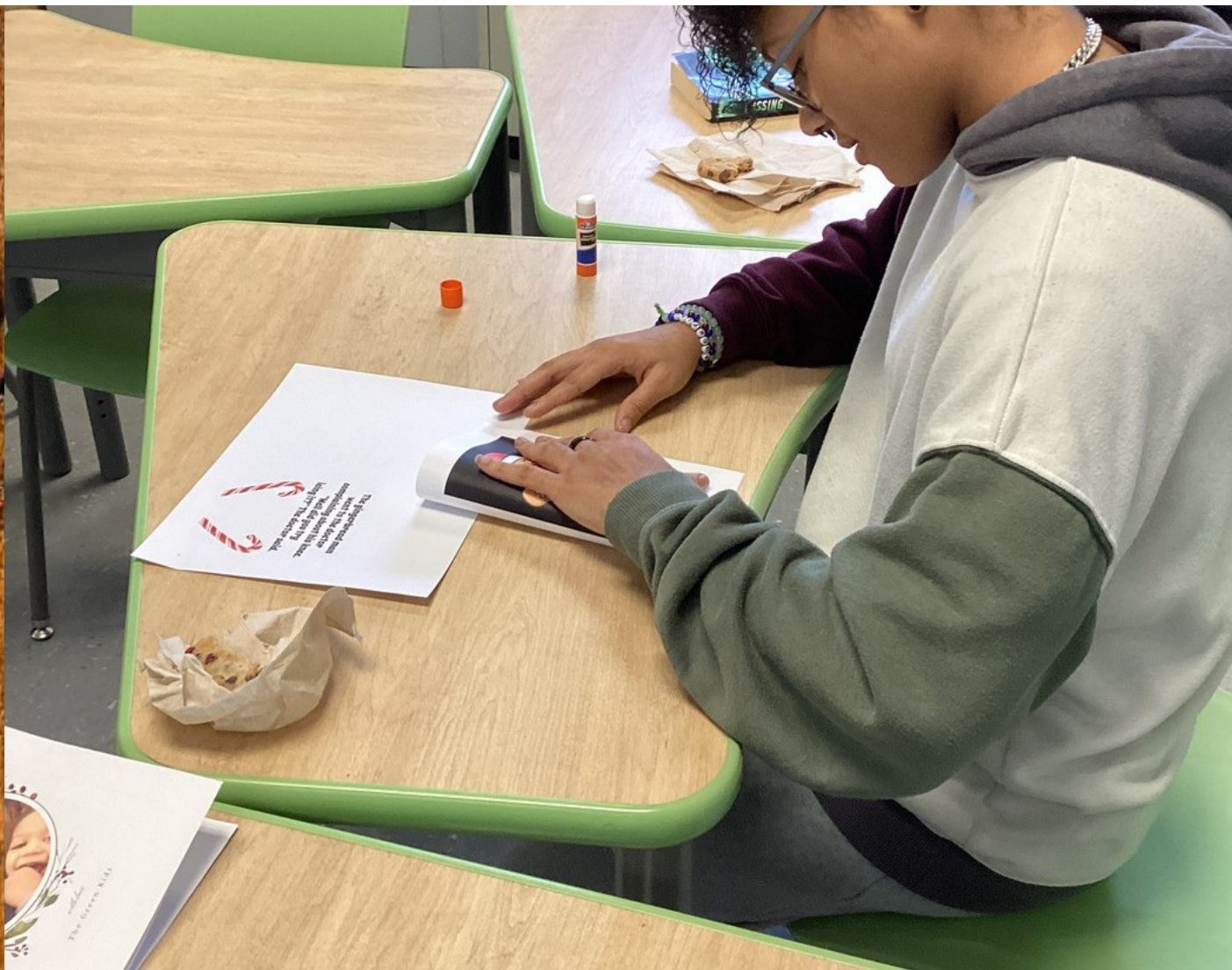


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## Group Therapy

Students continue to be fully engaged in their group therapy and look forward to participating in this daily. Not only does it enhance social skills and foster a safe place to express themselves, but it also allows them an opportunity to interact with students that are not necessarily in their daily cohort. With this month's theme as kindness and patience, the students decorated coloring pages for the nonprofit organization, Color a Smile. These will be sent to nursing homes and hospitals. As the holidays approach, students watched a video that depicted holidays across the world and then reflected on their own customs/traditions.





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Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni





## Gracie B.

LMA staff try to stay in contact with former LMA students, not only to continue to provide support, but to hear about positive updates. Former LMA student, Gracie B. has been in touch with Mrs. Ramirez, our district SAC. Below is a message from Gracie,

*I apologize for the late reply but as far as how I've been doing I'm currently in Passaic county community college (PCCC) studying psychology and eventually will transfer to Kean to obtain my PhD in Forensic Psychology. I still live with my grandma however, I have almost saved enough money to where I can be financially independent by next year at 20. I hope all of you are doing well and I appreciate every one of you guys especially Mrs. Ramirez for all the love and support I received while I attended LMA.*

This is just one of the many positive relationships we create, foster and maintain both in and out of The Mill!

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## Upcoming Community Events



# PROVIDER FAIR

## *Life After 21*

Please join us for an in person provider fair. Connect with different agencies offering supports and services to our students as they transition to adulthood. All UCESC families are welcome to attend!

**When**

**January 15, 2025**  
**7:00 pm**

**Where**

**Work Readiness Academy**  
Holy Spirit Church  
970 Suburban Rd, Union

**Register Here**



Contact Us  
908-838-0613



Email  
[ndellavecchia@ucesc.org](mailto:ndellavecchia@ucesc.org)



Our Location  
970 Suburban Rd. Union



Are you or someone you know affected by suicide?

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL



## INVISIBLE PAIN DAY



A day we commemorate those we have lost by suicide because of mental illness

Let's come together after the holidays to support and encourage one another while gaining knowledge and useful resources for you or a Loved One.

**IN-PERSON EVENT:** SATURDAY, JANUARY 11TH, 2025  
11:30AM–3:30PM (REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 10:30 AM)

**SNOW DATE:** SATURDAY, JANUARY 18TH, 2025  
11:30AM–3:30PM (REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 10:30 AM)

**LOCATION:** MIDDLESEX COUNTY FIRE ACADEMY  
1001 FIRE ACADEMY DRIVE, SAYREVILLE, NJ 08872

### Who is This Event For:

Those who have lost a Loved One by suicide; community supporters; anyone who has a Loved One struggling with mental illness.

### What to Send:

(Optional) If you would like to have your Loved one's picture(s) be a part of the memorial slideshow, please email [info@darrenmemorial.org](mailto:info@darrenmemorial.org) at least one week before the event.

### What to Expect:

- Support/ Encouragement
- Guest Speakers
- Vocalist
- Resource Tables
- Therapy dogs
- Activity Tables
- Candlelight vigil
- Lunch
- Poetry reading

A Calming sensory room will be available to speak with a Licensed Therapist.

SCAN TO REGISTER



Brought to you by:  **NAMI** New Jersey

Darren Clark Jr  
Memorial



<https://naminj.org/get-involved/invisible-pain-day/>

## GLOBAL DANCE JOURNEY/ VIAJE DE BAILE GLOBAL

Come join the Cardinal Family Success Center and the Institute of Music for Children for the GLOBAL DANCE JOURNEY. A Dance Program centered towards moving the body of the whole family. Come enjoy good music and cardio in the form of dance for the WHOLE family! There will be seven sessions happening once a week starting on Wednesday December 4th until January 29th 2025. Please put phone number and emails on the registration form so that we can contact you. / Unase al Centro de Éxito Familiar Cardinal y al Instituto de Música para Niños para el programa de baile Global Dance Journey, un programa centrado en mover el cuerpo de toda la familia. Venga a disfrutar de buena música y ejercicios cardiovasculares en forma de baile para TODA la familia! Se realizarán siete sesiones una vez por semana, a partir del miércoles 4 de Diciembre hasta el 29 de Enero de 2025. Incluya los números de teléfono y correos electrónicos en el formulario de inscripción para que podamos comunicarnos con usted.



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## Community Resources

The logo for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. It features the number "988" in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below it, the words "SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE" are written in a smaller, bold, dark blue font. The entire logo is set against a light blue background with a dark blue border.

If you or someone you know  
needs support now,  
**CALL OR TEXT: 988**  
**CHAT: 988lifeline.org**

*Talk with us.*



<https://988lifeline.org/>



**Mental Health  
Association in  
New Jersey, Inc.**

**Proud Affiliate of Mental Health America**

<https://www.mhanj.org/>

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<https://www.2ndfloor.org/>  
(888)-222-2228

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## School in the Community

1. Grounds for Sculpture Field Trip
  2. Gravity Vault Field Trip
  3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
  4. WBLE at Clark Public Library, Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's in Clark.
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## About Us

### **Contact Information:**

*Phone:* (908)-233-7581

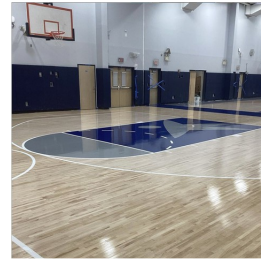
*Address:* 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, 07090

*Website:* [https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts\\_mill\\_academy](https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy)

*Instagram:* [https://www.instagram.com/ucesc\\_lma/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_lma/?hl=en)

Lamberts Mill Academy is a school within the Union County Educational Services Commission. We are an out of district public school for students with psychiatric disabilities. We continue to partner with RWJ Trinitas Regional Medical Center to provide clinical services for our students. Our school community prides itself on our relationships with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, families and community partnerships. Being a public school, we adhere to all NJDOE assessment and curriculum mandates. Our professional learning community strives to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction to provide students with the most effective educational, social and emotional learning environment possible.





**LMA Smore**

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





# Crossroads Monthly Report

December 2024

## Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

As we reflect on December, it's incredible to see how much we accomplished during this action-packed month! Our monthly themes of *Kindness and Patience* and the district's year-long theme of *Let Every Voice Empower* have guided us in creating meaningful experiences that encourage compassion, understanding, and inclusivity.



One of the main highlights of the month was the elementary school's trip to Lfetown. Whether playing on the indoor playground or shopping in the community stores, our students had an amazing time engaging in hands-on learning experiences. This trip not only provided joy but also reinforced vital life skills, as students interacted with one another and their environment. It also exemplified the idea of empowerment, as students practiced independence and decision-making in a supportive setting. We are already looking forward to our next adventure, scheduled for the end of January.

Another exciting opportunity this month was the visit from the Kindersmiles dentists. This program gave our students a chance to meet dental professionals in a friendly, supportive setting and build comfort with dental screenings and cleanings. The visit reinforced the importance of patience as students adjusted to new experiences and celebrated their ability to voice their needs and concerns—a key aspect of empowerment.



Of course, December wouldn't be complete without a variety of holiday activities! Students enjoyed punching their tickets to board the Polar Express, accompanied by delicious hot chocolate served by our Speech Department's hot chocolate cart. These moments reflected kindness in action, as students and staff shared in the joy of the season. We also learned about and celebrated Hannukah, with students enjoying jelly donuts as the jelly donut cart made its way around the building. These celebrations offered meaningful ways to embrace the spirit of the season as we explored diverse traditions.

We are also deeply grateful for the generosity of the families from Wardlaw-Hartridge School, who once again supported us with their annual giving tree. The joy on our students' faces as they received these thoughtful gifts during Santa's yearly visit to Crossroads was truly heartwarming and a testament to the kindness that binds our community together. Moments like these remind us how empowering it is to have voices from all parts of our community contribute to our students' happiness and well-being.

As we head into the winter break, we want to extend our warmest wishes to all of you. May this season bring peace, joy, and cherished moments with loved ones. We look forward to seeing everyone refreshed and ready for the new year in January!

Warm regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

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### Upcoming Dates

- December 20, 2024** - Early Dismissal (1:00 PM)
- December 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025** - School Closed for Holiday Recess
- January 1, 2025** - School Reopens
- January 13, 2025** - Early Dismissal (1:00PM) for Students for Staff Development
- January 15, 2025** - PTO/Parent Education and Support Meeting (12:30PM)
- January 20, 2025** - School Closed (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

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### General Information

#### Enrollment as of December 20, 2024

- Actual:** 54
- Changes:** Entered: 0 Exited:0
- Referrals:** 4
- Intakes Scheduled:** 2
- Accepted:** 1

- Fire Drills:** 12/13/24
- Emergency Drills:** 12/2/24 (Lockdown)

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## Honors and Accolades



### Happy Retirement Ms. Consuelo

After over 25 years of dedicated service, Ms. Consuelo will be retiring at the end of this calendar year. Her impact on our school community is immeasurable. She has touched the lives of countless students, staff, and families with her unwavering dedication, compassion, and expertise. Crossroads will not be the same without her presence and leadership, but we are thrilled to wish her a retirement filled with happiness, health, and all the joy she so richly deserves. Thank you, Ms. Consuelo, for everything you have given to Crossroads—you will always be a part of our family!

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## Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight





## **Student of the Month - Iker**

Our Student of the Month is Iker! This is his first year at Crossroads in Ms. Anna's class, and we are so happy he has joined us. Iker has made new friends, including Josh, Ava, and Sidney. He has quickly adjusted to our classroom routines and participates in our morning meetings. Iker enjoys playing basketball with his teachers and friends, and he loves playing with musical toys and receiving affection. We look forward to the rest of the school year with Iker and are excited to watch him grow and progress!



## **Staff Spotlight - Anna Kane - Teacher**

### **1. How long have you been working at the commission?**

I have worked at the Commission for 3.5 years.

### **2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?**

I have been working with children with special needs for twenty years.

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

My dream vacation would be going to Bora Bora with my husband.

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

My favorite dinner is my mom's macaroni. My sister and our families go every Sunday!

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

My greatest accomplishment is becoming a teacher. I have worked so hard while having a full time job, getting married, and having a family. I am so lucky to have found my second family at Crossroads!



## **Staff Spotlight - Gina Ahern - Teacher's Assistant**

### **1. How long have you been working at the commission?**

I have worked at the Commission for 2 years.

### **2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?**

I have a home baking business. I make cookies, cake pops, and cakes. My specialty is Chantilly Cake

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

My dream vacation is to go to Ireland and meet my husband's family.

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

My favorite food is Italian. I love fried calamari with sweet sauce.

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

My greatest accomplishment is becoming a grandmother.

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# Classroom Spotlights



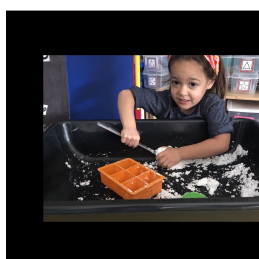
## Ms. Allison's Classroom

### December in Room 103

December may only have 3 weeks of school, but our class packed it full of fun memories. We took 3 field trips, celebrated at 2 staff birthday parties, got some dental checkups, had a movie day with our friends in 104 and 111, and WE MET SANTA!! Our very busy schedule has us a little tuckered out, but it was worth all the practice and progress accomplished during so many functional learning opportunities!

This month we went out into the community on a field trip every Thursday! Our first trip was a shopping and lunch trip to Dollar General and McDonalds. We practiced appropriate safety behavior in the community, and functional life, math and money skills. Our Speech Language Pathologist, Alayna, came with us to support language-based skill-building and facilitate social interactions! Everyone loved being able to pick something out and buy it at the cash register. Our next trip was to LifeTown, where we continued practicing community skills in realistic shops with actual money! The 103 boys really enjoyed all of the movement and sensory activities too. Everyone is excited for our turn to go again in the Spring! We ended the trip trifecta with one of our favorites: Imagine That! Our Occupational Therapist, Dina, joined us to facilitate fine and gross motor exploration, and support students' exposure sensory activities. Everyone loved being able to run around, engage with lots of different toys, and play on the pirate ship.

While our trips and events kept us busy, we didn't stop our learning there! Holiday crafts this month included Pete The Cat Saves Christmas for Crossroads' door decorating competition, making cards for our friends and staff, reindeer puppets, and a winter shapes snowscape. Cooking lessons were a huge hit with Christmas Tree Cones, Latkes, and sugar cookie decorating. We even tried a sensory recipe to make playdough snow! The staff and students in 103 had such a great December and can't wait to see what 2025 brings!!



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## Ms. Alexis's Classroom





Room 109 had a very exciting month. The students had a blast working on a gingerbread house where they learned about turn taking and choice making. Each student could express their unique creativity and style while decorating the house and adding a personal touch to it.

The class also went on a field trip to Life Town where they had an opportunity to explore different places they would see within their communities and become more comfortable with going to places like the doctor, dentist, learning to buy groceries, and a variety of fun activities. Every student had a great time buying popcorn, ice cream and different crafts learning about money skills.

This month the students also worked on housekeeping skills like sweeping the floor, setting the table and cleaning the table. I am so proud at how well they all are doing.



## Therapy Spotlight - Ms. Alayna, Ms. Jillian, Ms. Brianna - Speech Therapists



December is here and we've been busy bringing in the holiday cheer! During speech and language therapy sessions our students have been working hard on improving their functional communication skills, building their vocabularies and enhancing their knowledge of holidays and traditions. They chased the gingerbread man, made reindeer cookies, made handprint menorahs, enjoyed hot chocolate and laughed along as the old lady swallowed holiday items! Listening to holiday songs has also brought giant smiles to everyone in the building's faces.

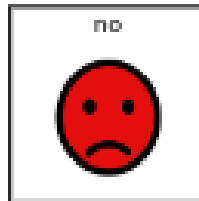
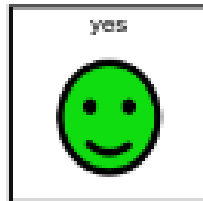
Each December, the speech department has a hot chocolate cart for the students to enjoy while watching *The Polar Express*. Each class receives order forms to bring up during their scheduled time. The students practice making choices and answering yes/no and wh- questions. They also work on ordering their hot chocolate, as well as asking for more snacks during the movie. It is a great way to put our functional communication skills to the test!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hot Chocolate

1) Do you want hot chocolate?



2) Choose your toppings



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## Nurses Corner - Nurse Lynn

### Vision Screening for Crossroads Students

We are thrilled to be hosting a **vision screening** event on **January 15th and 16th** using the latest non-invasive technology! This is a great opportunity to ensure your child's eye health is on track.

Please keep an eye out for the **consent form** that went home in your child's backpack this week. You can also access the form directly using this link:

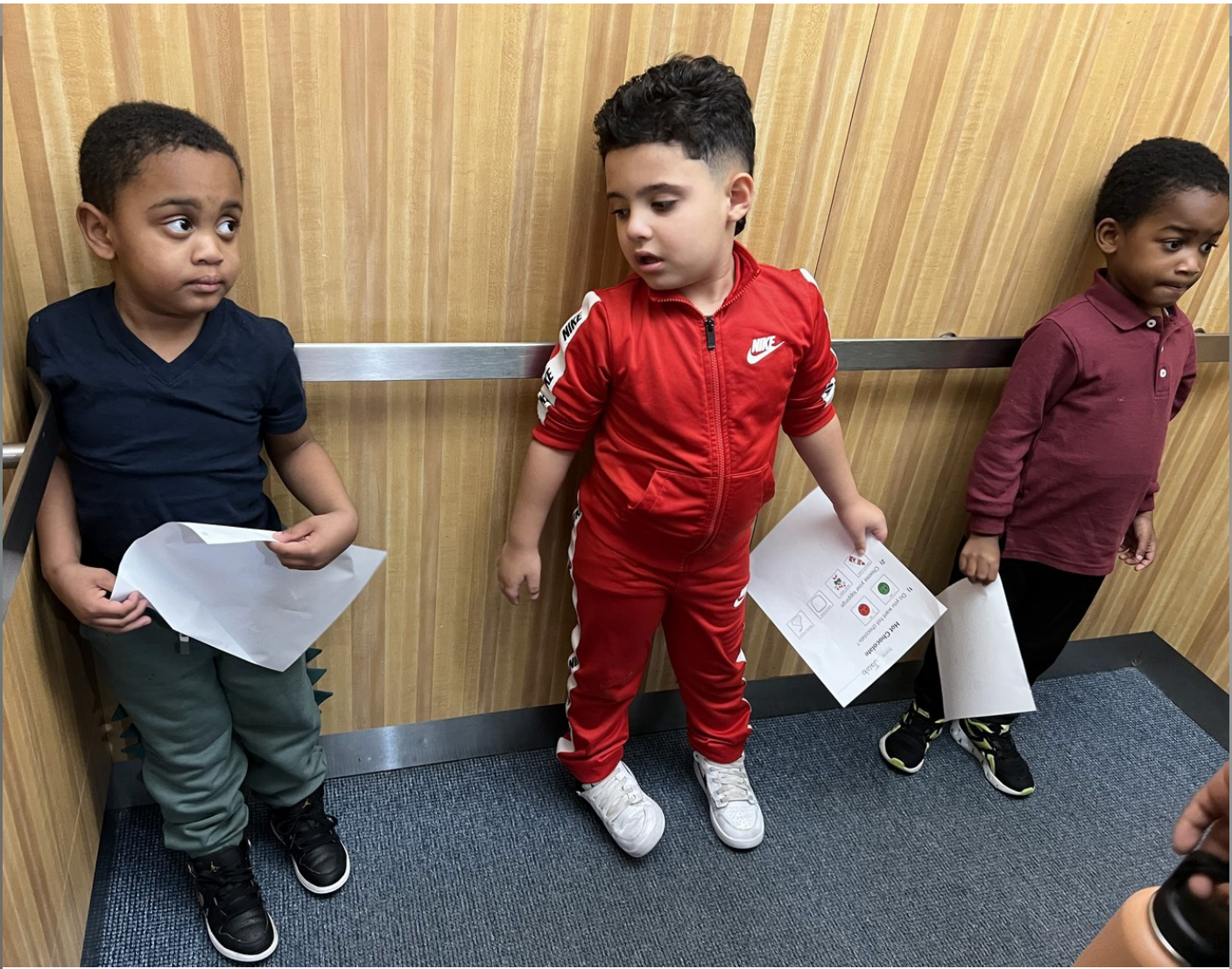
[Vision Screening Consent Form.](#)

Don't miss out on this awesome opportunity for your child!



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## December at Crossroads







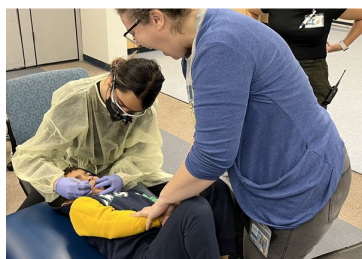












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## Crossroads in the Community



























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## Crossroads Holiday Festivities































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## Parent Resources

### December Tips and Ideas from the Behavior Team:

#### Supporting Neurodiverse Children During the Holidays

The holiday season can be a joyful time filled with celebration, connection, and tradition. However, for neurodiverse children, the changes in routine, sensory overload, and social expectations can also make this time challenging. With thoughtful preparation and strategies tailored to their unique needs, families can create an inclusive and enjoyable holiday experience for everyone.

This guide offers practical tips to help families navigate the season, from maintaining predictability and managing sensory needs to adapting traditions and practicing social scenarios. By prioritizing comfort, understanding, and flexibility, you can ensure that the holidays are meaningful and stress-free for your neurodiverse child and your family.

#### 1. Maintain Routine and Predictability

- **Stick to a Schedule:** Try to keep consistent wake-up, meal, and bedtime routines.
- **Use a Visual Schedule:** Display daily plans with pictures or words to provide clarity on what to expect.
- **Prepare for Changes:** If routines will shift (e.g., travel or guests), discuss and rehearse them ahead of time.

## 2. Prepare for Sensory Needs

- **Create a Safe Space:** Ensure there's a quiet, sensory-friendly area for retreat if the holiday environment becomes overwhelming.
- **Pack Sensory Tools:** Bring headphones, weighted blankets, fidget toys, or other calming items when visiting new places.
- **Monitor Overstimulation:** Keep an eye out for signs of sensory overload and plan breaks when needed.

## 3. Practice Social Scenarios

- **Role-Play:** Rehearse holiday greetings, gift exchanges, or dining scenarios ahead of time.
- **Explain Expectations:** Share clear, specific expectations for social situations, such as how long an event will last or how to ask for a break.
- **Use Social Stories:** Create or use pre-made stories that describe what will happen during holiday events.

## 4. Be Flexible About Traditions

- **Adjust Traditions:** Adapt holiday traditions to be more inclusive and comfortable (e.g., quiet lighting instead of blinking lights).
- **Simplify Events:** Focus on a few key activities rather than trying to do everything.
- **Honor Their Preferences:** Respect preferences for food, activities, and clothing, even if they differ from traditional norms.

## 5. Plan for Travel

- **Prepare for Delays:** Pack snacks, entertainment, and sensory items to manage long waits or changes in plans.
- **Practice Ahead:** Visit transportation hubs or watch videos about flying or taking a train to familiarize them with the experience.
- **Notify Staff:** Inform airlines, hotels, or hosts about specific needs to receive accommodations.

## 6. Manage Gift-Giving

- **Set Expectations:** Let your child know what to expect during gift exchanges.
- **Be Selective:** Choose gifts that align with their interests and sensory preferences.
- **Respect Boundaries:** If opening gifts in front of others is overwhelming, allow it to happen in private.



## 7. Incorporate Interests

- **Holiday Themes:** Integrate their special interests into holiday decorations, activities, or stories.
- **Offer Choices:** Let them choose how to engage in holiday activities (e.g., picking decorations or helping with baking).

## 8. Take Care of Yourself

- **Plan for Breaks:** Caregivers need rest too! Schedule downtime for yourself.
- **Seek Support:** Connect with support groups, family, or friends who understand and can help during the holidays. Your Crossroads Behavior Team is here to support you in any way we can.

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## Reminders (Cold Weather)

As we enter the winter months please be sure to pack warm weather clothing for your child. As long as it does not get too cold we will make every attempt to have the students enjoy recess outdoors. 🧒



## About Us

**Website:** [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads\\_school](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school)

**Location:** [45 Cardinal Drive, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

**Phone:** [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



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